



# 神墓

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Alternative Name: 神墓, Tomb of God

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Synopsis:

After having been dead for ten thousand years, Chen Nan finds himself resurrected in the mysterious Shenmo Cemetery. Without knowing why

he was brought back to life, he embarks on a journey to begin his life anew.

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Info :

<http://www.novelupdates.com/series/shen-mu/>

Translator:

<http://moonbunnycafe.com/shen-mu/>

or

<https://zoengsaiwaa.wordpress.com/>



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## Volume 1 Chapter 1: Ancient Divine Graves

Throughout the boundless and desolate universe, black sky and yellow earth condensed... even if one was freed from the six realms of samsara, they would find it difficult to avoid the upheaval of heaven and earth...

Shenmo Cemetery was located at the center of Tianyuan Continent. Excluding the burial sites of the strongest of humankind and other various top ranked xiulianist beings, at every grave was buried an ancient god or demon. This place could be considered as the resting site of gods and demons.

The fragrance of fresh flowers wafted from the velvet carpet of grass in the cemetery. If the cemetery didn't have the scattered forest of stone tablets, it could be thought of as garden. Towering snow maple trees surrounded the cemetery. It has been said that these trees – unique to Shenmo Cemetery – specialized in dissipating the spiritual qi of the gods and demons.

The deep verdant foliage of the snow maple tree softly swayed with the breeze as if reminiscing the glorious days of old. Immaculate snow white petals drifted in the air like snowflakes. These were the tears of deities expressing their past grievances.

The city of the dead's daytime and nighttime had sharply contrasting sceneries.

Dense mist of immortal qi radiated holiness throughout every inch of the cemetery during the day; it was apparent how formidable the ancient gods and demons were. Even the Western Angel could be seen dancing

and the Eastern Fairy could be heard singing. The entire cemetery carried a certain divine atmosphere.

If daytime was the paradise of gods, then nighttime was the land of demons.

When the sun set in the west and the curtain of night fell, dark demon qi erupted from the graves, even causing the stellar light of the moon and stars to lose their luminescence and the heaven and earth to become bleak. At this time, legendary demonic illusions could be seen: evil illusory shadows engaging in wanton massacre in the cemetery. The shrill wails of ancient evil spirits could be heard. Just the mere sound of these howls was enough to cause indescribable head pains.

Both divine and terrible, Shenmo Cemetery served as the sacred place where xiulianists from both eastern and western Tianyuan Continent could congregate and worship. During the day, people could be seen paying homage. Even at night certain special xiulianists could be seen mourning: Eastern Rushing Corpse, Western Undead Mage...

Only at sunset was the cemetery peaceful without a hint of sound.

The time of sunset has once again arrived; the time for the scenery to again alternate. The sunset's brilliant afterglow rendered Shenmo Cemetery solemn and somewhat peculiar.

Every gravesite was carefully taken care of. Every gravesite had an assortment of flesh flowers in front.

At the side of a group of especially exalted tombs was a low, small grave. This small grave was not at all conspicuous and was without fresh flowers; just a simple small mound of earth. The elements had long ago eroded this nameless, forgotten grave in the corner.

In the sunset's afterglow, the exalted tombs appeared even more grandiose while the nameless grave appeared even more unremarkable. However, an unusual event began at this moment: cracks slowly appeared on the small grave, soil began to tumble off its top.

A pale hand stretched out from the middle of the grave, followed by another. Two hands had erupted out and gripped the edges of the grave. The confused face of a young boy slowly emerged from the grave. His long disheveled long hair was moist and caked with dirt. His clothes were tattered and pressed tightly against his body. Other than his incredibly pale complexion, he appeared perfectly ordinary like the kind of person that no one would ever notice.

"What is this place? How am I here?" the boy muttered to himself. Seeing the tombs in front of him, he grew even more confused.

Suddenly, he took notice of some inscriptions at the side of a tomb beside him. At this time, if someone were to see this boy focusing on the ancient writing inscribed on the tomb, they would definitely be startled. Even the old scholars of the Ancient Culture Research Organization could only bitterly shake their heads and sigh when faced with this kind of ancient writing.

As soon as he finished reading the inscriptions, the boy's expression dramatically changed and he frightfully exclaimed, "Eastern Martial God Zhan Wuji's Tomb? This... is this real? Is this really that all-powerful

legendary figure who criss-crossed the three worlds and six realms unhindered, Zhan Wuji? Could it be that... even gods can't escape death?"

Beside him was another divine tomb which again caused him to recoil in shock. "Western Warrior God Kai Sa's Tomb, Kai Sa? Could it be that Western God who wore the golden armor and wielded the golden holy sword?"

As if he had just thought of something, he turned his head to look in all directions. Every exalted tomb stood tall and upright and appeared especially dazzling in the sunset.

"Eastern Xiuxianist Fairy Mu Dan's Tomb, Western Wise Goddess Na Si's Tomb, Eastern Martial Immortal Li Changfeng's Tomb, Eastern Xiumoist Ao Cangtian's Tomb, Western Great Demon Emperor Lu Xifa's Tomb..."

"Heavens! What is this world? Could it be that... those old deities have already died and... and have been buried here?" The youth's expression became miserable, on his face an indescribable look.

"But... the deities of eastern Xianhuan Continent and western Mohuan Continent... how could they be buried here together?"

Suddenly, the youth noticed the small grave at his feet and froze momentarily. Cold sweat seeped through his tattered clothes as if he had sunk into an icehouse.

"I... I crawled out... from this grave..." His eyes dulled and his mind

blanked, as if his soul was spirited away. Lifelessly, he fell softly onto the ground.

"I'm Chen Nan, I already... died, but... I've revived..."

After a while, Chen Nan's dull eyes gradually showed signs of life, revealing an astonished look on his face. "Heavens! What happened?! Since I've already died, how could I crawl back out from the grave?!"

"Could it be that heaven wants this useless person to continue living a mediocre life?!" After his surprise, other than confusion, pain could be seen on his face. He shut his eyes and cradled his head.

He clearly remembered how he was defeated and killed in a duel, however at this moment...

Memories resurfaced in his mind one after another. That previous memory, that forgotten memory, that unforgettable memory... it truly pained his heart with regret!

The world is as boundless as before, the grass and flowers are just as fragrant as before, but his unceasingly heart swayed to and fro.

After a long time, Chen Nan rose up off the ground and took a look at the cemetery around him. Finally, his eyes landed on that group of exalted tombs. He slowly calmed from his astonishment.

"The hardest golden tombstones are clearly etched with thousands of years of vicissitude. The deep blue sea changes into mulberry fields; so

many years have already gone by. Haha... a dream for the ages!" sighed Chen Nan.

[T/N: 滄海桑田/ deep blue sea changes into mulberry fields; meaning 'the world is quickly changing'.]

Looking at the forest of stone tablets, his heart swelled with uncertainty.

"Howling Heavenly Tiger Xiao Zhen's Tomb, Three-Headed Demonic Dragon Gai Rui's Tomb, Martial Sage Liang Feng's Tomb, Heavenly Knight Ao Tuoli's Tomb... other than gods and demons, I can see some powerful humans and a few other strange xiulianists."

"What the hell happened ten thousand years ago? How did these so-called immortal gods and demons die? How could the deities of Xianhuan Continent and Mohuan Continent be buried here together? Why the hell am I buried here?"

A slight breeze blew through his unruly long hair... and through his unruly, lonely heart.

Chen Nan cried to the heavens, "Who can tell me what the hell has happened?"

No one answered him.

Countless petals from the distant snow maple trees drifted and scattered through the sky. The falling blossoms were like a rain of tears; the departed deities were weeping!

"Gods die, demons die, but I still live... Heaven, why do you let me crawl back out from my grave? What do I do now?"

The sun is setting beyond the western hills; the sunset's afterglow dyed half the sky crimson. The clouds tumbled passed the gilt edge of the horizon.

[T/N: 日薄西山/the sun is setting beyond the western hills can also mean 'nearing one's death/end'.]

Chen Nan collected his thoughts. He knew some things in life were just uncontrollable and he only had the ability to move forward one step at a time.

He delicately filled in the small grave at his feet with dirt. Afterwards, he began to leave the cemetery. Passing through the dense spiritual qi in the snow maple forest, he couldn't help but be stupefied. Never before has he seen trees with such a great affinity for absorbing spiritual qi. He inwardly suspected that during the years he spent 'sleeping', a new species of tree had emerged.

Whenever the immaculately white flower petals drifted passed Chen Nan's face, he would temporarily become disorientated as his dust-laden memories slowly resurfaced. This was the season for flowers to fall...

He recalled from his heart 'her'...

"The deep blue sea changes into mulberry fields; the human world ebbs and flows... ai!" Shaking his head, Chen Nan took large strides away from the forest.

By the time he left the snow maple forest, the sun was setting passed the horizon. The once calm Shenmo Cemetery was no longer tranquil. Dark demon qi leapt out from the graves and unceasing darkness began to envelope the entire cemetery.

Chen Nan could barely make out the sound of a growl from behind him, but he paid it no mind; after sunset, of course beasts would come out to prowl. Stretching his muscles, he said to himself, "Ten thousand years, but my body isn't rusty yet." He knew that his own martial ability wasn't too good, but it was probably sufficient to deal with any old beast.

Not too far from the snow maple forest were three thatched cottages. A man as emaciated as a fowl stood at one of the doors. He had a thick beard and a face carved with wrinkles, evidence of his hardships.

Bafflement surged from Chen Nan's heart; this was the first person he's seen since his revival. He felt a hint of friendliness, a hint of loss, and a hint of confusion...

When he was born ten thousand years ago, his parents were the ones who had welcomed him. After his revival ten thousand years later, he is met with this old man.

"How will my parents and this old man compare with one another?" he said mockingly at himself.

The old man propped himself upright with a crutch and shakily made his way towards Chen Nan. It was a frightful scene as it seemed like a mere gust of wind would blow him off his feet.

Chen Nan hastily moved forward to support the old man, but the old man waved him off, signaling him to relax. With a reproving tone, the old man spoke a few sentences, but Chen Nan couldn't understand a single word.

That incomprehensible voice immediately froze his heart as he realized ten thousand years have passed; the language of his age has already been discarded by history.

He had originally hoped that the old man could explain the current world to him, but the apparent language barrier quickly dashed his hopes.

Chen Nan's stiff countenance caused the old man to soften his tone, but seeing the loss on Chen Nan's face, the old man frowned and pulled Chen Nan towards the cottages.

The stupefied Chen Nan followed the old man. His intuition told him that the old man was without malicious intent, but because of the language barrier, he could only feign ignorance.

After leading Chen Nan to the cottages, the old man pointed at a bucket on the ground and at a water well not too far away. Then, he entered one of the cottages.

"Having me fetch water? Could it be that he wants me here as a laborer?" Chen Nan secretly suspected.

But when the old man reappeared from the cottage, Chen Nan knew he was wrong about him. In the hands of the old man was a set of new clothing. Obviously he wanted Chen Nan to change.

Seeing the light smile on the old man's face, Chen Nan's face reddened. He was dressed in rags with disheveled hair and a filthy body.

Dejection flashed in Chen Nan's heart. Ten thousand years ago, how could he be this poverty-stricken? He silently lifted the bucket and headed towards the well.

Using his vital qi and a bit of effort, the tattered clothes on his body completely disintegrated onto the ground.

These used to be his divine silk clothes! Time really is ruthless. Even his treasured impenetrable clothing couldn't avoid the test of time!

Ice cold well water cleansed his body of filth, but it couldn't cleanse the agony in his heart.

"What should I do? I can't understand the modern language so I can't communicate with anyone. How the hell will I survive in this world?!"

Chen Nan filled out the old man's clothes very well. To show his gratitude, he went up to the old man in front of the thatched cottage and gave him a warm smile.

The smell of cooked rice soon wafted through the air. The old man slowly went up to the hearth and beckoned Chen Nan to follow.

Chen Nan lifted up the bowl of congee that the old man handed to him and sighed in his heart, "Ten thousand years. Who would've thought that I would be able to sit at a dining table again? The world is truly hard to predict!"

His stomach was completely empty and wasn't suited to eat any oily food; a bowl of congee was perfect. After dinner, the sky was already dim. Chen Nan followed the old man into the cottage. The old man lit a candle, illuminating the entire cottage with a warm glow.

The cottage was simply furnished: a wooden bed, a handful of chairs, and a desk.

The desk was spotless. Ten or so books were placed neatly on top, but Chen Nan couldn't recognize the writing on any of the books' covers. After ten thousand years, the common language had changed beyond recognition, giving Chen Nan a sense of loss.

After the old man went into another room, Chen Nan reclined in a chair. Countless thoughts and feelings were rushing through his heart, but he was not one bit happy.

Although he was originally from an illustrious family ten thousand years ago, he himself was merely mediocre. His life had been one of immense pressure. He was fed up with the pain and had long ago grown tired of that kind of life. If not for his inability to quell the worry in his heart, he did not think death was necessarily a relief.

The god of destiny makes fools of the people; ten thousand years later,

he would unexpectedly continue his life. Although he had finally broken away from that heavy stress, everything had already changed...

Chen Nan felt agonized beyond compare. The spirits of his family and friends have already gone to the netherworld. His close female friend has also gone back into the yellow earth. Now that he has been left to live alone in this world, he no longer felt any joy in life.

He laughed at himself, "Is it really I who has broken free from history, or is it history that has abandoned me?"

The candle went out with a final flicker of a spark, leaving the cottage completely dark.

Outside the window, the stars shone and the night was especially serene, but Chen Nan tossed and turned on his bed unable to sleep.

Using his ancestral profound skill, he forced his heart to calm down. He wanted to see if his power was still the same after ten thousand years.

His vital qi flowed like small streams within his body. After ten thousand years, his strength had not changed one bit.

Through the painstaking use of his profound skill, his senses immediately sharpened. He faintly heard the sounds of wretched roars coming from the direction of the cemetery. These sorrowful roars were truly hair-raising!

"There's this many beasts? This old man is so old and watches over the

graves by himself. This really is too dangerous!"

Chen Nan didn't know that at this time, the old man had already returned to Shenmo Cemetery with a basket of fragrant snow maple flowers in hand. In the face of those demonic illusions and illusory shadows, the old man paid no mind. He placed a cluster of pure white jade-like flower petals in front of every grave. His devotion was extraordinary.

Because Chen Nan's 'former residence', the small grave, was now empty, the once protruding mound of dirt had caved in. The grave was almost completely gone. Only a very slight bulge remained.

The old man quivered as he moved towards the small grave and cried out, "Ai! Who told you not to have a tombstone? I'm afraid from now on you'll be forgotten by the people. Actually, this isn't too bad. Less glory, but it's quieter. No one will disturb you now. Return to where you once came."

With these words, the old man slowly squatted and stretched out his hands, carefully flattening the remaining mound of dirt. The small grave completely disappeared. Ten or so petals floated down, leaving behind their scent.

The first thread of sunshine shone in through the window in the early morning. Chen Nan opened his drowsy eyes and said to himself, "Weird, why didn't father send someone to make me practice today? Oh, right, he's already entered the realm of immortals; he can't harass me to cultivate anymore."

Suddenly, he noticed the simple furnishings of the cottage and abruptly sat up. After a while, he muttered, "Turns out this is all real. Ten thousand years have quickly gone by!"

He lightly pushed open the cottage door and arrived at a courtyard. He breathed in the refreshing morning smell of fresh flowers and grass. A faint mist flowed and ebbed around the forest. Birds unafraid of people jumped up and about in the trees, tactfully chirping. Chen Nan closed his eyes, letting his heart take in this harmonious scene.

"You're awake?" The old man's voice came from behind.

Chen Nan couldn't understand his words and could only return a smile.

After eating breakfast, Chen Nan pointed into the distance at the end of a winding road and signaled to the old man that he was leaving. Before he left, Chen Nan kowtowed deeply to the old man.

He arrived at a small town after some time. Because of his ordinary appearance and clothes, no one paid particular attention to him.

At this time, Chen Nan was both happy and worried. Happy because this was the start of his new life, but worried because he couldn't understand a single word of the modern language.

To his amazement, Chen Nan found that other than those black-haired, black-eyed, a hundred surnamed people like himself, people had blonde hair and green eyes, red hair and blue eyes, blue hair and black eyes...

"It seems like too many things happened during these ten thousand years. I better hurry and blend into this society."

Suddenly, Chen Nan felt a chill run up his spine and his heart froze. Relying on his intuition, he knew he was under the scrutiny of an expert.

From afar, a fifty year old Taoist priest shook his head at the sight of Chen Nan's back and exclaimed, "Strange, just now I clearly felt that this kid has a peculiar way of breathing. Why is it that when I carefully examined him, it went away?"

Not until the Taoist priest walked away did Chen Nan dare to turn his head to look. He could only see the silhouette of his back, which calmly radiated the elegance of an enlightened immortal.

Chen Nan recalled the words of his father, "Chen Nan, you must remember! Before you master the breathing technique of our ancestral profound skill, you can't be reckless around wanderers. It isn't the experts of martial sects you should be weary of, but the inborn xiudaoists especially!"

"He's a xiudaoist! This kind of person rarely meddles with worldly affairs, right?" Chen Nan deeply understood that this kind of person was truly terrifying; even advanced martial experts don't dare to make enemies with them.

His father's words rang through his mind. "...reforming the mortal body, concentrating the fundamental essences of life, until their longevity rivals that of the heaven and earth and the sun and moon; this is xiudaoists' ultimate goal, and it's also the realm of immortals. We martial

practitioners follow a path that goes against heaven's will in order to try and reach the legendary realm of immortals. In the eyes of many, the path of us martial practitioners is inferior to that of xiudaoists', but..."

His father spoke no more, but Chen Nan clearly understood. Martial practitioners really can't compare with xiudaoists, and his father was the best example of this, even though those successful xiudaoists had treated him like an equal.

With this in mind, Chen Nan's heart stirred. "I don't know if father reached his ultimate goal of entering the realm of immortals, but if he did... maybe one day father and son can meet once more."

But once he recalled that forest of gods' and demons' tombstones in the cemetery, he panicked in his heart.

"If father had entered the realm of immortals, maybe he also couldn't avoid..."

He immediately became forlorn.

Pedestrians on the street came and went. The calls of buying and selling and the lively hustle and bustle of the market surrounded Chen Nan, but he felt lonely beyond compare. He felt discarded by the world; history had ruthlessly abandoned him.

"I've always been mediocre. Since I've been dead for so long, why would I crawl back out from the divine grave?"

A large black cloud floated through the sky causing the color of the sky to immediately darken.

"Hong!"

With a boom of thunder, the shops at the sides of the street quickly shut their doors and the pedestrians hurried along. Soon, the busy street was cold and desolate, leaving behind only a solitary figure at the street's center.

With a flash of lightning and another clap of thunder, heavy rain poured down. Ice cold rain water penetrated Chen Nan's clothes. He felt his body chill, but what chilled even more was his heart. The desolation and cold in his heart was unmatched.

"Heaven and earth are so vast, but where's my home?"

Between heaven and earth was a curtain of rain. A lonesome figure remained unmoving on the street. The downpour pummeled his body.

Ten thousand years ago, Chen Nan had come from a martial family. In the field of cultivating martial arts, he had been blessed with the upmost talent. Everyone thought highly of him. However, a nightmare had soon begun. The cultivation of his ancestral profound skill didn't advance, but rather, it declined. His Mahayana actually dropped from the second Chongtian back down to the level of the first Chongtian.

Back then, his father had already stood at the pinnacle of the martial way. With this kind of family, it was inevitable that he was being observed

from all directions. Chen Nan had obviously faced tremendous pressure.

During those drab days, cold scorns, heated insults... they replaced the pressure that was once blasted at him from all around. It left him at an utter loss of what course to follow.

However, there was one person who had believed in him, believed that he would definitely have great achievements one day. Recalling 'her', Chen Nan grew depressed. An indescribable sorrow boiled in his heart.

"Yu Xin, did you know? My biggest regret is never telling you those three words: 'I love you'."

How easy time flies by; red cheeks turn old.

[T/N: 紅顏易老/red cheeks turn old; meaning 'beauty is fragile'.]

The never-ending pain in Chen Nan's heart was Yu Xin, his life's biggest regret.

In a state of frenzy, Chen Nan staggered down an alleyway and felt his lungs were about to burst.

"Wa!"

A spurt of blood shot out of his mouth onto the muddy ground.

"Yu Xin..." His vision became dark as he lost consciousness.

# Volume 1 Chapter 2: Breathtaking

When Chen Nan opened his eyes, he found himself lying on a wooden bed. The cushy mattress gave him a sense of warmth and cosiness.

The sky had darkened long ago, but it continued to rain. An oil lamp gently shone in the middle of the house.

The pitter-patter of rain, the comfortable bedding, the gentle light, Chen Nan's heart filled with warmth. He felt right at home.

With a light push of the door, a fifty year old woman and a fifty year old man entered the room with friendly faces. The woman said, "You're awake. Kids these days really don't know the severity of their actions, running around outside during the rain."

Chen Nan didn't understand the modern language of the continent, but understood that the old woman had good intentions. He hurriedly leapt off the bed and greeted the old married couple.

It was only until now that he realized that he was dressed in a clean, dry set of clothes.

"Auntie, thank you!"

The woman gave him a blank look, obviously not understanding Chen Nan's words. The old man thought nothing of it; there were many

different kinds of people in the continent, of course there would be people that speak different languages.

Chen Nan followed the old man out of the house. At the same time, a youth entered. The youth was about eighteen or nineteen years old and had a sturdy build. He flashed Chen Nan a friendly smile.

Chen Nan smiled in return.

After eating dinner, Chen Nan expressed his thanks towards the couple, then returned to his room and slept.

In his dream, the beautiful image of a woman emerged from a sea of flowers and left in a shower of flowers, but not before leaving behind a barely discernable whisper, "I'll wait for you... until we meet again..."

Soon afterwards, Chen Nan dreamt of his father, Chen Zhan. Chen Zhan's expression was wise and abstruse, as if he could see through any worldly illusion. He faintly said, "People who ascend to great heights surely must feel inferior; people far away surely must be near. In this world, what's important isn't where you are, but the way in which you approach the direction you move towards!"

Chen Zhan's image gradually vanished, but Chen Nan's mother materialized instead.

"Leave behind your ostentatiousness; die ordinarily..."

One after another, the images of those once close to Chen Nan

materialized before slowly vanishing.

Early in the morning, Chen Nan woke up and pushed open the door. The rain has stopped long ago and a rainbow was suspended up in the sky, giving the world a magnificent scene.

"Ten thousand years. What else can I not let go? I need to start anew!" Chen Nan cried out loudly.

He decided to face reality and start a new life.

Time was like an arrow, flying like a shuttle. In the blink of an eye, half a year went by.

Chen Nan relied on his martial abilities to become the most outstanding huntsman in the small town. Every day the number of prey he caught would be several times larger than those of other huntsmen. Relying on the profits from his hunting, he purchased a small courtyard. Other than hunting and cultivating his skills, he mainly spent his time learning and studying the continent's modern language from the town's residents. Although he couldn't directly communicate and speak with others, he could more or less already understand the words of those around him.

In addition, Chen Nan continued to change his mentality, accepting reality. He no longer felt lost or confused, and he already began to blend in with society.

Ever since he began to understand the modern language, Chen Nan

finally began to grasp the changes that flipped the sky and the ground upside down during the last ten thousand years.

[T/N: 翻天覆地/flip the sky and the ground upside down; meaning 'complete confusion'.]

Originally, only a single channel of water separated Xianhuan Continent and Mohuan Continent. A great earthquake had violently occurred at this link and pushed the two together.

Xianhuan Continent in the east and Mohuan Continent in the west each had unique, great civilizations. After the continents joined together, because of differences in culture and religion, the ethnic races of the two former continents experienced daily friction with one another. Along with escalating tensions due to their conflicting views, the two sides broke out into war.

This was a time of catastrophic warfare. The battlefield comprised the entire continent. Nowhere was safe. Blood flowed like rivers. Countless able-bodied men were enlisted into the army, never to return. Several million commoners died violently. A record number of people perished, and a miserable fog of death clouded the entire continent.

The war grew more and more desperate. In the end, the Holy Western Church dispatched magi and temple horsemen to tip the scales in their favour. In the east, the experts of martial sects and xiulianists, who had originally ignored such worldly affairs, also entered the fighting. From east to west, a huge confrontation between xiulianists began: vital qi against battle qi, flying swords, Daoist magical weapons against magic. On the battlefield, sword qi and battle qi raged haphazardly. The power of Daoist weapons and magic dazzled and flared.

In the end, neither side emerged victorious. After the great war, the battlefield was littered with countless corpses. On the continent, the pitiful cry of geese was heard.

[T/N: 哀鴻遍野/pitiful cry of geese; meaning 'the land was covered with victims of disaster/famine'.]

Both parties, now with the knowledge and experience of bloodshed, realized the tremendous danger of war. In the end, they signed a ceasefire agreement.

Time can weather anything. After a thousand years, the tensions eased and the conflicting views of the various ethnic groups slowly faded away. The initial attempts at merging the ethnicities together were successful. Xianhuan Continent and Mohuan Continent were replaced by a single merged continent, named Tianyuan.

"So that's how it is. No wonder this town has so many different ethnicities. So this is due to the merger of Xianhuan Continent and Mohuan Continent. No wonder I came across fire-breathing wolves when I was hunting; turns out it's a magical beast from the west."

After learning this, Chen Nan was incomparably shocked, but at the same time he felt that many matters were clarified.

After another half year, Chen Nan finally grasped the modern language of the continent. He deeply understood the affairs of Tianyuan Continent and completely assimilated into modern society.

It was only natural that he still found some matters to be hazy; he never understood what had happened to all those gods and how all those

formidable deities had died.

He had asked around town, but no one could answer him.

Finally, an old man in the town said to him, "Child, not only you want to know the answer to this question, but many people all over the continent would like to know, but it remains an unsolved riddle."

Chen Nan said, "It seems like when the war erupted between the two continents, it directly led to the deities fighting one another." With that said, he felt his heart stop beating. Just how powerful were they? He was mind-blown.

The old man shook his head and said with a smile, "Child, you really are imaginative. In fact, a thousand years before the two big continents broke out into war, Shenmo Cemetery already existed. No one knows when it was actually built, and even fewer know who built it."

Chen Nan cried out in alarm, "What? Before the two continents merged... the two continents' deities were already..."

The old man nodded, "Correct. When so many graves of deities were found there, the whole world was shocked. Countless xiulianists rushed there. Even Mohuan Continent's xiulianists dangerously crossed the channel to visit. Since then, Shenmo Cemetery has been seen as sacred. The strongest people throughout history are buried there, showing their prowess."

"However... Shenmo Cemetery is located at the boundary between the

two continents, why didn't the earthquake destroy it?"

The old man sighed, "All along Shenmo Cemetery was a place of riddles."

In this year time, Chen Nan had wished to go pay a visit to that old man guarding the cemetery, but he never went.

"Since I've already started a new life, I should forget about going back to Shenmo Cemetery and visiting the old man guarding it and just leave them in my memory."

The span of one year isn't too long or too short, but Chen Nan viewed this year as one of great meaning. He learnt the modern language and softened his mentality. From there, he felt that there were no longer any deep blue mulberries, and he no longer felt a sense of desolation. He had regained his youthful vitality. He decided to leave the small town and travel around the world.

[T/N: 滄桑/deep blue mulberries, shortened from 滄海桑田/deep blue sea changes into mulberry fields; meaning 'vicissitudes'.]

Since Xianhuan Continent and Mohuan Continent were now merged together, a grand, unending mountain range extended forever into the distance at the border. Small towns at the edge of Xianhuan Continent, at the newly formed boundary between the two continents, were not even twenty li east from the endless mountain range.

No one dared to enter the depths of the mountain range because not only were there vicious, ferocious beasts, but also the ancient giants of legends. To ordinary people, that place was without a doubt a land of

death. Even the most seasoned huntsmen of nearby towns only dared to hunt near the mountain range's surroundings; they did not dare to even take one step into the abyssal mountain range.

Gigantic flying dragons, colossal ancient giants... these rumours deeply enticed Chen Nan. When he decided to leave the small town to travel, the first stop he wanted to explore was near this 'great, fearsome, vicious land'.

Before his departure, Chen Nan gave away his house as a present to that old couple who had took him in when he first arrived. With that, he took great strides away from the small town.

The wheel of history begins to turn. From here, the legend starts!

By his lonesome, Chen Nan walked into the depths of a large mountain. He had already spent three days travelling through the endless mountains, seeing countless vicious beasts. Unable to defeat these beasts, he actively avoided them.

"There aren't too many extraordinary beasts here."

Suddenly, a giant figure flew by, leaving behind a violent gale.

Chen Nan couldn't help but turn pale in fright. He raised his head to look around and saw a giant, thirty zhang long 'strange bird' soaring through the air above him.

The entirety of the strange bird was dark green with sparkling specks.

Behind its body, it dragged a ten zhang long tail.

"Holy! A featherless—no—a fully fish-scaled strange bird! Its tail really is too ugly," he gasped in surprise.

If someone were to walk by, they would surely ridicule Chen Nan's ignorance for not being able to even recognize one of the most valiant creatures on the continent, a dragon. But at the same time, they would admire his courage; in front of a dragon, this fool would unexpectedly dare to 'appraise the head and discuss the feet'.

[T/N: 品頭論足/appraise the head and discuss the feet; meaning 'to find fault in minor details/be overcritical or nitpicky'.]

This green dragon clearly didn't notice the insignificant creature on the surface of the ground, nor did it hear its 'idle gossip'. Otherwise, it would undoubtedly dive down and tear that insignificant creature to shreds.

Seeing the green dragon gradually disappear into the distance, Chen Nan awoke from his fright and said in hindsight, "That can't possibly be one of those legendary dragons. This... this is just too much. That whole thing was just a long, winged, pregnant lizard! It must have come into existence due to the strange dragons of Mohuan Continent mingling with the divine dragons of Xianhuan Continent. Simply... ai!"

Of course, Chen Nan had never seen Xianhuan Continent's legendary mythical beast – the dragon – but the legends of divine dragons were really innumerable! From those legends, one could pry a little into the world of dragons. Furthermore, from exquisite sculptures, one could also make out the appearance of the perfect creature, a dragon.

A Western Gigantic Dragon had flown by before his eyes just a moment ago, leaving him incredibly disappointed. Maybe that green dragon was tyrannical, but he had a feeling that the Western Gigantic Dragon absolutely couldn't compare with an Eastern Divine Dragon.

Chen Nan said to himself, "If there was a day I could see an Eastern Divine Dragon with my own eyes, that'd be good. Alas, that green dragon just now was really too... ugly."

He didn't know how the green dragon would feel after hearing his words, but it probably wouldn't think 'racial discrimination', but rather it would directly 'carry out the land's proper rules at once'.

[T/N: 就地正法/carry out the land's proper rules at once; meaning 'to execute/carry out the law on the spot'.]

There were a countless number of extraordinary scenes in the mountains, including clouds and fog coiled around mountain peaks; strange, craggy stone forests; and gushing waterfalls streaming into small ponds.

Chen Nan stopped at the peak of a mountain. Above his head, the blue sky seemingly cleansed him. Below his feet were white clouds rolling like magical breaths. His heart surged endlessly.

"Ten thousand years. Haha... who can lament ten thousand years? I, Chen Nan, can! Haha..."

Chen Nan's excitement slowly calmed. He looked at the indigo sky and truly felt ethereal.

A pure bluish green brook zigzagged down the mountain side. After Chen Nan descended the summit, he felt his body begin to unusually heat up. He energetically plunged into the brook. After making use of his ancestral profound skill to still his breathing, he drifted along with the current. After an unknown amount of time, he felt the speed of the current begin to slowly relax until it completely stopped. He opened his eyes and saw that the brook kept flowing off into the distance, but he had been flushed into a clear pool at the riverbank.

Suddenly, a splash came from the middle of the pond. An extremely beautiful scene came about in front of Chen Nan. A woman arose from the middle of the pond like a lotus flower breaking into the surface, elegant and refined. Long, jet-black hair were dripping wet on her shoulders. Specks of water droplets rolled off her jade-like cheeks. Maybe she shouldn't be called a woman, but instead should be called a girl, as she appeared to be only sixteen or seventeen years old. Along with her incomparable complexion were two quick-witted eyes, with long eyelashes, a straight, refined nose, and a small rosy mouth. She gave off the impression of a fairy, a pure angel.

[T/N: 出水芙蓉/lotus flower breaking into the surface; meaning 'surpassingly beautiful'.]

Looking even further down, what Chen Nan saw made his nose bleed. The proud girl's elegant twin peaks had just poked out from the surface of the water. The lustre from the floating, puzzled girl caused his most primal desire to flare up.

Meanwhile, this girl also took notice of Chen Nan. Those two big, quick-witted eyes immediately exuded alarm. She shrieked and called out, "Ah! Come guards, a hoodlum!"

Chen Nan was greatly startled. He never expected this cliché situation to happen to him. The accusation of being an obscene, licentious person would undoubtedly be hard to scrub away. In a moment of desperation, he hurriedly leapt forward and embraced the girl to cover her face and her mouth. That tender, slippery nude body in his bosom made him feel like his blood vessels were bursting.

Suddenly, great strength rushed forth from the girl's body and, all of the sudden, Chen Nan was sent flying. Simultaneously, her body as graceful as a swallow fluttered out from the water and landed ashore, quickly throwing her clothes back onto her body.

When that great strength surged at Chen Nan, he knew that what had just conspired was far from good. This seemingly beautiful and pure girl was a skilled expert of a martial sect. He felt that this girl's cultivation was much higher than his own. If he hadn't soundlessly floated to the girl, it would've been impossible to come across her.

A dozen or so silhouettes flew from the nearby grove. Simultaneously, a brilliant, undulating light shot forward from the trees and a light blue screen appeared before the girl. Those dozen or so flying guards arrived at the girl's side, protecting her at the center of their formation.

Chen Nan could now be considered as a resident of Tianyuan Continent. Just now, that brilliance that he saw should've come from the spell of a magus. At the same time, he noticed that the cultivation of those dozen or so guards was not inferior to that of martial experts. He felt his head begin to ache. The protective formation of these guards clearly meant that this girl was absolutely not ordinary. If not a noble girl, then she was the daughter of a prestigious family. He provoked a person

that shouldn't have been provoked.

Three magi emerged from the nearby forest. The three were very young. One of them mumbled a few words to himself. With a wave of his hand, the brilliant protective screen around the girl faded away.

As soon as the magical protective screen was about to disappear, the girl angrily shouted, "Quickly grab that person and let me kill them! Quickly!"

Chen Nan promptly shouted, "This beautiful young lady, please listen to what I have to say..."

"You shut up! What are you guys staring at? Hurry and bring him to me!"

At present, this peerless beauty's face was covered with murderous intent, itching to slice and dice Chen Nan.

"It's a misunderstanding..."

Nevertheless, the three magi walked forward and one of them said, "Freed from the world, thy Water Spirit, please heed my summons, Column of Water."

The air fluctuated. With a crash, a column of water leapt up from the water's surface and attacked Chen Nan.

Chen Nan originally didn't care, but when that column of water just came into contact with him, he discovered its tremendous hidden power. He hastily dodged to the side.

"Tong!"

The column of water struck the surface of the pond, causing an enormous wave to push Chen Nan towards the girl on the shore.

"What! That girl will rip me apart if I make it to the shore." Chen Nan hastily swam back.

"Tong!"

At this time, that magus who had summoned the column of water once again chanted a spell. The undisturbed water surface once again fluctuated forward and layer after layer of waves rushed towards Chen Nan, stubbornly pushing him towards the shore. Those guards protecting the girl promptly stepped forward, encircling him.

Chen Nan sprang out from the water, flashed an unsightly grin, and said, "This is truly a misunderstanding..."

"Shut up! You guys quickly grab him and lie him down on his stomach," the girl ordered.

These dozen or so guards contained both men and women. Although they were young, none of them were weak. They all pitifully looked at Chen Nan, as if he were already a piece of meat on the chopping block.

Chen Nan knew that this battle was unavoidable, so he pre-emptively launched his attack. His pair of palms pushed outwards. Layer upon layer of afterimages of his palms struck out. With that, his body soared into the air, intending to leap out from the encirclement. Obviously the guards didn't give him the slightest opportunity. Two guards effortlessly neutralized the flapping of his hands and flew up into the air after him, forcing him to descend.

At the instant when his body began to descend towards the ground, he threw a palm technique behind him, suddenly thrusting him forward. Without turning his head, he threw out another palm backward.

"Hong!"

Chen Nan shakily blasted forward. Seeing that he was about to fall, his face flushed red with embarrassment. A fresh spurt of blood filled his mouth, but he swallowed it back down with great difficulty.

Those guards seemed to understand Chen Nan's situation clearly. Again, they formed a circle with him in the middle. That girl who seemed to be the guards' leader walked towards him. This female chief was awfully pretty and had the appearance of being unable to withstand the wind. Still, Chen Nan didn't dare to be careless; he knew this girl was absolutely not weak.

[T/N: 弱不禁風/unable to withstand the wind; meaning 'physically weak/delicate'.]

A razor-sharp sword flashed like lightning at Chen Nan. In the blink of an eye, a blade appeared before him. Chen Nan quickly dodged to the

side, but a strand of his hair was still cut by the girl's slash and floated to the ground.

He breathed a mouthful of cool air. This girl's swordplay was like lightning and he wouldn't be able to put up any resistance without first advancing in his ancestral profound skill, improving upon his first Chongtian of his Mahayana. While Chen Nan was momentarily distracted in his thoughts, the pretty girl once again attacked. With a longsword in hand, she pierced in a flash towards his vitals.

After the two exchanged thirty or so moves, Chen Nan proved inferior and was struck backward by the girl's palm strike. Falling over, he spat out three mouthfuls of blood.

The guards held Chen Nan up and brought him in front of the girl.

"Hmph! You smelly hoodlum trying the same old tricks! I even thought you were something special!" the girl sneered.

A whiff of cool air went through Chen Nan's heart. The expression of the girl before his eyes was completely different than that of the one he had seen in the water. She was a completely different person. When he had seen her in the water, she had seemed like a small angel. But now, he sensed that a beautiful, small demon was the one standing in front of him.

"This... en! Little sister, just now, I truly didn't mean to offend you. I was afraid of you crying out and causing me unnecessary troubles, so I threw myself at you and embraced you..."

"Shut up." The girl was shooting fire from her eyes. She lifted up her tiny foot and gave him a ferocious kick.

Chen Nan realized that he shouldn't budge an inch, much less say a word.

The guards protecting the girl had maintained steady, calm attitudes the entire time, but hearing Chen Nan's words, their faces immediately changed colour and they yelled out in succession, "What? This stupid bastard has the impertinence to humiliate Her Highness the princess? He really should be hacked to pieces." Then, they hurriedly went down on their knees and shakily said, "Subordinate deserves death! We failed to properly protect Your Highness the princess." Everyone's faces were covered with cold sweat.

Now, the princess regretted what just conspired. She regretted giving Chen Nan the chance to speak and letting him 'speak rubbish', making her feel beyond ashamed and unable to properly face her subordinates.

The little princess, flustered and exasperated, said, "You guys too! This bastard is spouting off rubbish, how can you believe his crap? I already noticed him when he was far away. Am I supposed to give you guys a chance to show off? I already dealt with him before you came."

Her fierce gaze arrived on Chen Nan lying on the ground and said, "Hmph, you dare to slander and insult this princess. I'll have you viciously beaten to death."

Chen Nan didn't move an inch and didn't say a word. He heard her clearly, but he didn't expect this girl to be a princess.

The guards clearly didn't believe the princess's words either. In their hearts, Chen Nan was a low-class scoundrel without any sense of shame. They advanced towards him and beat him senseless until his body was like a pincushion, bitten by ants, until he hovered between life and death. In just a short time, Chen Nan's body was black and blue with bruises.

"Enough, he'll die after a few more hits." Seeing Chen Nan covered in bruises, the little princess happily smiled, seemingly satisfied by this outcome. The young bodyguards stopped trampling all over him and moved aside. The princess flashed Chen Nan a charming smile and walked over.

Chen Nan inadvertently disgraced an imperial princess and was almost cruelly beaten to death. His heart relaxed, thinking that his punishment had ended.

The princess giggled sweetly into his ear, "Your kind of fellow's lust encompasses the heavens, unexpectedly wanting to mix yourself with this princess. Luckily, this princess is wise, brilliant, always one step ahead, and figured out what you were trying to do. If you had peeked at me, then what face would this princess still have? I'd be mocked to death."

Chen Nan stared blankly at her. "Wait a minute, what did she just say? Isn't she smiling at me? But by the tone of her voice, it doesn't seem like the situation is very good." He continued to look at the princess and felt uneasy. Although the princess's smile was sweet, wickedness crept through it. He couldn't help but shiver and break out into a cold sweat.

The princess sweetly laughed, "Come men, castrate him."

"Weng!"

A loud ringing rumbled in Chen Nan's mind and his vision blurred. Now, the princess's smile was undoubtedly brimming with viciousness. He thoroughly understood: this was a little demon with the outward appearance of an angel.

## Volume 1 Chapter 3: Little Demonic Princess

Seeing the little demon smiling so sweetly, he felt his body shudder. He wanted to struggle, but couldn't move a single step. He wanted to yell, but no sound came out. His clothes clung to his skin from the cold sweat.

"On someone's cutting board, I serve as the fish meat. I just recently began traveling, so of course I'd suffer some tragic experiences. Heaven, you won't make a fool out of me, right?" The fear in Chen Nan's heart reached an extreme level. If he was castrated, he might as well be dead.

[T/N: 人為刀俎, 我為魚肉/on someone's cutting board, I serve as the fish meat; meaning 'to be at someone's mercy'.]

After giving out her order, the little demonic princess turned to the side. The faces of the female guards flushed red as they followed her.

One of the male guards unsheathed his longsword and deliberately waved it back and forth in front of Chen Nan, scaring him into shutting his eyes. The chilling point of the sword pushed up against his skin, immediately raising a swell. The guard flashed Chen Nan a smile filled with evil intentions and moved his longsword towards Chen Nan's lower body. This 'wait' caused Chen Nan incomparable suffering. In just a minuscule amount of time, he collapsed in convulsions.

The little demonic princess, after waiting so long, still didn't hear his scream. She couldn't help but feel that this was strange. She turned around and saw her subordinate mentally torment Chen Nan and thought that this was rather amusing.

The princess quickly walked towards them and, with a pleased expression, nodded her head towards her subordinate. Everyone was left slack-jawed and wide-eyed when they saw the longsword in her hand. She patted his face with her longsword and said, "Interesting, who knew that this rapist would be so afraid of death."

Chen Nan noticed that the little demon had returned, with a longsword in hand at that. She held the blade between his nose and eyes, incessantly rocking the sword until his face turned green with fright. If she wasn't careful in swinging that sword around, then he wouldn't need to worry so much about being castrated anymore.

Seeing Chen Nan so terror-stricken, the princess was delighted. She gently stroked the side of his ear with the edge of her sword and cut off a strand of hair. When the strand of hair reached his neck, Chen Nan's face changed.

He saw the guards looking at him with smiling expressions; they understood the princess all too well. Although the princess was already sixteen, she raised a ruckus like no one else could. She was witty and naughty, sometimes resembling that of a mischievous child. She was unpredictable, leaving others unable to protect themselves against her.

The little demonic princess seemed to be tired of her play. Wielding the longsword, she directly swung it towards his lower regions, startling the guards, who promptly shouted, "Your Highness the princess, you cannot."

These assistants were really frightened, but their level of fright was second to that of Chen Nan's. If the emperor were to discover that his young daughter had taken matters that would disgrace the imperial household into her own hands, he would be enraged and those guards

would be put to death.

The princess's face was void of joy as she questioned, "What are you guys doing? You still want to meddle in my affairs?"

A female guard broke out of formation and said, "Princess is of great importance and nobility, she mustn't... she mustn't do..."

"Hmph!" The princess threw her sword onto the ground and her face regained its cold demeanour. She turned around and ordered, "Bring him with us. I'll need to sort him out slowly."

Chen Nan, who had been wallowing in despair and fear, seemed to hear the call of an immortal rescuing him from the netherworld as he finally saw a thread of hope. He let out a long sigh. This really is a little demon!

At the princess's side, there were altogether twelve guards, six of which were male and six of which were six female, and three male magi.

All of them were young, but their skills weren't weak. The three magi had effortlessly forced Chen Nan out of the water. Then, the female warrior had knocked down Chen Nan in about thirty moves. From this, one could sleuth a little of their actual strength.

Chen Nan's body regained its freedom, but the little demonic princess didn't release his mute acupoint. It was true that 'obstructing the people's voice is more frightening than obstructing the flow of rivers'!

[T/N: 哑穴/mute acupoint; an acupoint at the back of your head that

controls speaking, among other things.]

He inwardly muttered, "These people also have black hair and black eyes; it seems like they're also easterners, but some of them can also unexpectedly use magic. In all likelihood, when the two continents merged together, the upper class people already started to learn all kinds of cultivation methods, resulting in easterners being able to grasp a little bit of western magic. Westerners can probably grasp some eastern martial arts now as well."

Chen Nan watched as the little demon hopped and skipped through the mountain forest and he inwardly cursed, "Twist your back, sprain your ankle, fall over..."

But he was disappointed each time. The little demonic princess resembled a little bird broken free from its cage: cheerful and lively. Occasionally, she would even run up to him and brutally smack his head or painfully pull at his ears.

Chen Nan truly suffered under her onslaught. Although he had already used his ancestral profound skill to secretly release the little demon's Single Acupoint-Attacking Technique, he had no choice but to 'cutely' remain mute.

When they were resting at night, Chen Nan wanted to covertly slip away, but whenever he moved his body even the slightest bit, the guards standing night vigil would cast a cold gaze into his direction. They left him no choice but to abandon his plans to escape.

"I didn't think that I, Chen Nan, would actually be reduced to this state. Little demon, you mustn't chop off my..."

The party had already spent three days traveling through the great mountains. Previously, they had spotted a massive dragon flying above them and the huge footprints of an ancient giant. These sightings granted the little demonic princess plenty of excitement. Every time this happened, she would make Chen Nan 'voice' his happiness, leaving Chen Nan to spit his 'excitement' out onto the ground.

To Chen Nan, this was a truly painful journey. He felt nothing but hate and irritation towards the princess, but could only endure.

After two days, Chen Nan finally realized the identity of this group and what the journey's goal was.

The little demonic princess was the Emperor of Chu's youngest daughter, Chu Yu. She was the emperor's favourite and was endlessly doted upon by the Emperor of Chu and the Empress. The guards protecting her were trained by the emperor as specialized men of sacrifice, loyal and devoted to the princess. As for the three magi, they weren't genuine magi, but were currently still in training.

In a few more months, it would be the Chu Emperor's sixtieth birthday. In order to convey her filial piety, she had secretly snuck out of the palace in order to travel to the western borders of Chu to pluck a legendary Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus to serve as a present for the emperor. In regards to her subordinates, she had threatened them again and again to accompany her out.

"You guys tell me, after I obtain the Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus and give it to father, what will his facial expression be like? Eh, I think he'll

certainly smile from ear to ear and allow me to freely enter and leave the Imperial City as I like. Hehe, this is too great! Afterwards, I can play wherever I want, and no one can stop me, hehe..."

Chen Nan exclaimed in his heart, "Now she seems so cute, just like a genuine angel. She has the appearance of an angel, but the temperament of a demon!"

All the imperial guards cringed. Although they were forced by the princess to accompany her, the emperor surely wouldn't just let this be. Instead, he'll probably punish them once they return.

"Hmph! Did you guys eat bitter melon? I've told you guys many times already, father certainly won't punish you guys." The princess was somewhat unhappy. Seeing Chen Nan beside her, she said, "Hmph! This degenerate has the cheek to secretly smile! Come over here and let me practice my skills on you!"

Until two days ago, the princess always called Chen Nan a rapist, but after a female guard quietly told her a few things, the princess became aware of what she was implying and, feeling ashamed, beat Chen Nan up in a fit. Afterwards, she stopped called him a rapist, choosing instead to call him a degenerate or a smelly thief.

Chen Nan braced himself, unwilling to go over. He prayed in his heart, "God, Buddha, angel sisters, although I know you guys are living 'happily and prosperously' in Shenmo Cemetery, don't you guys still have this faraway relative? Please descend here. Demons, ghosts, Lord of the Netherworld, quickly come grab your sister and bring her away."

In these two days, he had served as little demonic princess's punching bag a number of times already. The princess's skill in martial arts was unusually high. She devastated him, giving him a bloody nose and a swollen face. It was too detestable to even look at.

The princess evilly laughed at Chen Nan, "Why do have such a worried look and a bitter face? Don't tell me that accompanying me in practicing my martial arts is too difficult to bear? Hmph!"

"Hehe, I've progressed. Not bad. I'll test out these moves again. Hehe, now you know how awesome I am. It's too funny, hehe..." The sound of the princess happily laughing, proud of herself, echoed through the forest. Another nightmare began for Chen Nan.

On the sixth day, the party finally arrived at their destination. A volcano appeared in their sights. Clouds of smoke poured out from the volcano, as if it could erupt at any time.

Chen Nan was inwardly fearful. "This terrible little demon really is insane, coming to a volcano to pluck a Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus."

The princess's imperial guards were unceasingly anxious. One of the magi-in-training asked, "Your Highness the princess, does the mouth of the volcano really have a Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus?"

The princess was slightly unhappy and replied with a groan, "Naturally it does. Are you guys scared?"

That magus-in-training hurriedly replied, "No, of course not. We pledge

our lives to help Your Highness the princess pluck the Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus."

The princess explained, "When my old teacher accidentally found the Immortal Lotus here, it hadn't matured yet. After calculating it, these two days are the most optimal to pluck it."

A female guard reminded her, "Your Highness the princess, I've heard people say that all immortal treasures will have spiritual beasts protecting it. I don't know if this Immortal Lotus..."

"Oh, if you didn't remind me, I would've forgotten. My teacher said there are some small snakes there. Eh, can't you guys deal with some small snakes? You just have to pay a little attention," the princess said carelessly.

Chen Nan muttered in his heart, "Pay a little attention?! Are the spiritual beasts that protect immortal treasures so easily beaten? The nerve of this little demon really isn't that of an ordinary shit. Not good, I mustn't be at the front. I should stow away at the back."

The party embarked on their trek. Chen Nan moved slowly until he was finally left at the rear.

"Degenerate, you go to the very front." The crystal clear sound of the princess's voice ruined Chen Nan's plan.

He cursed in his heart, "Little demon..." He was extremely unwilling to lead the party at the very front.

"Yi! Degenerate, what's up with your face, you really don't want to? Don't tell me that you want to learn whatever whatever skills like those experts and have a battle with me at the summit? Wa, very good! Then let's have a battle at the peak of the volcano," the princess called out happily.

Chen Nan sighed in his heart, "Demonic princess!"

The closer they got to the mouth of the volcano, the higher the temperature of the air became. The heat left them stifling hot and the rocks under their feet became increasingly more scalding. Chen Nan was somewhat nervous, constantly guarding against and dodging the little snakes hiding in hidden crevices.

Everyone finally reached the summit. Bursts of smoke bellowed out from the mouth of the volcano. The air was unbearably scorching; the mouth of the volcano was like an oven. Beads of sweat that dripped onto dark brown volcanic rocks on the ground would immediately vaporize into steam.

A strong, flowery aroma could be smelled from the bellowed smoke, causing the gloomy and exhausted party to immediately perk up and become refreshed.

Inside the mouth of the volcano, on the side of a steep precipice, a bright, fiery light could be seen through the smoke. The fragrance was coming from that exact place.

The princess laughed, "There really is a Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus!"

Teacher didn't lie to me. Hehe, this is too great."

Everyone equipped protective muslin masks around their mouths and noses. The princess took a look at Chen Nan and threw him one, saying, "Hurry and put it on. The toxicity of this smoke is really high."

Chen Nan felt a hint of appreciation towards her, but it immediately disappeared when he heard her continue to say, "Hurry and put it on well. Hurry and pull that snake out of it."

He inwardly said, "A demon is always a demon!"

The smoke continued to bellow out from the mouth of the volcano. Their vision was awfully limited. As they looked down, they could only barely make out a dim brightness; it was without a doubt the glow of lava. Chen Nan trembled in fear as he circled the volcano's mouth. He prayed in his heart that the snake had fallen asleep.

The aroma emanating from the Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus grew stronger and stronger. A light wind dispersed the smoke coming from the volcano and Chen Nan's vision immediately cleared.

The Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus took root three zhang down the inside of the volcano and was about half a meter tall. Its whole length shone in fiery brilliance. Nine sparkling, translucent red leaves grew off its stem. The top of the flower was shaped like a lotus, but was far brighter and more beautiful by a hundredfold. Luminous, blazing petals glistened as if they were carved out of jade. Its remarkable lustre seized the eyes.

More smoke bellowed out from the volcano and the sight of the Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus gradually became more and more obstructed, until only a sliver of its blazing glow could be made out. Suddenly, Chen Nan sensed an immense crisis in his heart, as if he were prey being stalked by 'someone'.

A pitch-black cave mouth appeared not too far from where the Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus was situated. In the cave, two blood-red spots glistened and dazzled. With a deafening rumble, a countless number of gigantic rocks tumbled from the cave and dropped into the volcano's depths. A colossal monster emerged from the cave.

Chen Nan was beyond terrified; his soul simply flew away and scattered. That colossal monster was actually a massive snake's head about the size of a house. Those two glistening and dazzling blood-red spots were actually its pair of scarlet eyes which were each about the size of a washbasin.

[T/N: 魂飛魄散/soul flew away and scattered; meaning 'to be frightened stiff'.]

"Honglonglong!"

With another rumble, countless crushed rocks poured into the volcanic abyss. The Monolithic Snake slowly pushed out of its cave, exposing a length of its gorgeously-coloured serpentine body. Its body was fully covered with scales the size of palm-leaf fans. They flickered and flashed, bewitching and frightening.

"We... we're going to die. This... this is what the little demon told us... the little snake? Fuck... this... this is too ridiculous," Chen Nan cursed as he

shuddered.

The Monolithic Snake stopped moving and its two blood-red eyes stared at Chen Nan. Meanwhile, it opened its gigantic mouth, exposing a set of thick, white venomous fangs as sharp as swords. They were each about half a meter long, malevolent and terrorizing.

Chen Nan felt a cold stream rapidly spread from his head to toes. His body broke out in goose bumps.

Suddenly, a two zhang long blood-red forked tongue shot forth from the mouth of the Monolithic Snake and coiled towards him. A fishy stench came forth, strong enough to make anyone nauseous.

"Ah~!"

Chen Nan yelled, turned, and jumped, his speed reaching the fastest he's ever achieved. He ran and shouted, "Demonic smelly princess, I'm going to fucking- You want to fucking kill me~!"

The princess had always thought that Chen Nan's mute acupoint was sealed. Hearing his loud cursing at her, she became startled, then incessantly angry. But when she noticed the gorgeously-coloured Monolithic Snake behind Chen Nan, her expression took a turn before quickly calming. Finally, she said something that nearly made Chen Nan black out: "This snake is really pretty!"

Like wind, Chen Nan sprinted down the volcano and when he passed the princess, he cursed, "Creep, lunatic, demon...!"

The princess dispatched those guards worthy of being called well-tested men of sacrifice. After their shock, they quickly calmed down, gripped their weapons tightly, and waited. The three magi-in-training began incanting their spells. Magical elements fluctuated and arose in the sky. But out of their expectations, a Monolithic Snake emerged from the mouth of the volcano, exposing its length. It remained motionless, only coldly gazing at everyone.

The princess was abnormally calm and collected. "Everyone, don't be afraid! The Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus is about to mature. That smelly snake has already been here guarding it for a millennium. At this pivotal point in time, it won't take even half a step away from the Immortal Lotus. We'll attack it from a distance."

After that, she ordered, "Hurry and grab the realgar and sprinkle it over the body of the smelly snake."

Ten or so pouches were simultaneously launched at the Monolithic Snake. Meanwhile, the magi-in-training's incantations completed. A broad blade of wind, glittering like snow, rushed towards it to attack.

The blade of wind pierced the pouches and realgar scattered in the air before gracefully descending and falling onto the Monolithic Snake's body. Its body trembled and it recoiled backward.

Everyone's spirits rose and another set of realgar-filled pouches and another blade of wind were sent attacking. The Monolithic Snake's coldly-flashing scales were pelted with adhesive realgar. Pungent realgar smell flooded the mouth of the volcano. Not too long later, the Monolithic

Snake withered up on the ground and remained motionless.

Everyone promptly cheered.

In one breath, Chen Nan had sprinted down half the mountain. Upon hearing the cheers erupting from behind him, he couldn't help but turn around and look.

"I really didn't expect this little demon to actually have some real skill. To go as far as to defeat that sort of colossal monster, she truly deserves to be called a demonic sister."

He recalled the Monolithic Snake's sharp venomous fangs and sinister, red forked tongue and felt some lingering fear, but he also felt very annoyed.

Chen Nan took a look up at the volcano's mouth and really wanted to run away from that little demon and resume his exploration of the world, but he also wanted to stay behind and watch the once-in-a-lifetime battle with a Monolithic Snake. His heart wavered. In the end, he couldn't resist the temptation and quietly climbed back up to the mouth of the volcano. When he was ten or so zhang away from the mouth, he hid himself behind a giant boulder.

The princess cautiously sized up the withered Monolithic Snake. Afterwards, she laughed, "Who could've thought that this smelly snake would be so cunning, purposely not fighting back in order to fool us. No one go forward, attack it from here."

Pulling out powerful crossbows, the imperial guards shot arrows at the Monolithic Snake. The three magi-in-training also began chanting aloud their spells, preparing a magical attack.

A row of plumed arrows and flying locusts were launched at the Monolithic Snake, but to everyone's amazement, when the arrowheads forged from steel essence came into contact with the scales, they only caused some sparks to be emitted before sliding off.

The magi-in-training shot off a tremendous blade of wind to take a stab at the Monolithic Snake, but it barely made it tremble, nothing more. It didn't even leave a mark.

The princess decisively ordered, "Stop attacking it at other places and concentrate all your attacks on its two eyes."

The flying arrows were like rain and were shot simultaneously at the Monolithic Snake's two blood-red eyes. The Monolithic Snake jeered at everyone and closed its eyes. The rain of arrows was defeated.

At the same time, the three magi-in-training gathered a great amount of magical elements and condensed it into three thick Ice Spears. Under the sunlight, the three Ice Spears radiated resplendently and, like a long rainbow, shot towards the Monolithic Snake's pair of eyes.

"Pang!"

"Pang!"

“Pang!”

When the Ice Spears reached the Monolithic Snake’s eyes, they utterly disintegrated. These three formidable magical attacks resulted in a trace line of blood running down the Monolithic Snake’s eyelids. Meanwhile, the Monolithic Snake lifted its head, transforming from its withered appearance. The Monolithic Snake’s forked tongue flickered in and out of its mouth. Its sharp venomous fangs released a cold, soul-penetrating light. Its two blood-red eyes gazed unwaveringly at everyone.

Chen Nan, hiding behind a boulder, was prepared to flee at any time.

“Pu!”

The Monolithic Snake opened its gigantic mouth and breathed out a tremendous flame. Scathing, raging flames engulfed everyone. In a flurry, the three magi-in-training read aloud a spell. A light blue magical screen protected everyone inside.

Seeing this, Chen Nan was slack-jawed and wide-eyed, and exclaimed, “No way! This petrifying monster has already finished its cultivation. My God, a Snake Demon!” Seeing this, he retreated another ten zhang from the battlefield.

At this moment, the three magi-in-training again gathered enough magical elements. They opened up a corner of their magical screen and an expansive curtain of light was sprayed toward the Monolithic Snake. The cyan curtain of light transformed into layers upon layers of Ice Waves. In the blink of an eye, the raging flames surrounding everyone were extinguished. At the same time, the Monolithic Snake was drenched and

left dripping wet. The mouth of the volcano emitted a steaming white mist. Everyone took advantage of this chance to retreat a distance of seven or eight zhang.

The Monolithic Snake was infuriated. With a loud rumble, it extended another four, five zhang out of its cave. Even more crushed rocks fell into the depths of the volcano. Now, seven or eight zhang of its serpentine body was in the air. The Monolithic Snake's massive head appeared especially fierce. The Monolithic Snake looked down at everyone, in its eyes an ominous glint. It seemed to want to sweep down, but it retreated back to the Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus' side instead. Volcanic rock stuck to its body.

The princess waited for her men to catch their breath. At this time, a female guard stepped forward and said, "Your Highness the princess, this Snake Demon has already finished its cultivation. It's not something we can defeat. We should retreat."

A magus-in-training added, "Right, this... what kind of little snake is this? This... this is a Snake Spirit. We better..."

The princess shot him a glare, immediately scaring the magus-in-training into shutting his mouth.

Chen Nan, hiding behind a rock, said to himself, "The princess is as ferocious as the Monolithic Snake!"

The princess said, "Didn't I give you thirty six immensely powerful magical arrows? If we don't use them now, then when will we? Shoot them now!"

The guards nocked the magical arrows to their bowstrings and simultaneously aimed at the pair of scarlet eyes.

"Sou!"

"Sou!"

...

The magical arrows flew forth like lightning. The arrows quivered in the air. Magical elements oscillated in the air irregularly. The Monolithic Snake, as if smelling the scent of danger, dodged its fierce head toward the side. The magical arrows struck the Monolithic Snake's mouth and sparks flew. Afterwards, the arrowheads abruptly exploded and a large plate off the left side of the Monolithic Snake's mouth blasted off. After a few more magical arrows pierced this target, the blood and meat of the Monolithic Snake's head were indistinct, exposing thick white teeth.

[T/N: 血肉模糊/the blood and meat were indistinct; meaning 'badly mutilated/mangled'.]

The Monolithic Snake was infuriated. Its enormous coiling body rose up. Between its thick white teeth, its blood-red forked tongue flickered in and out. At the same time, the rest of the snake's body hidden in the cave continuously came rushing out. The earth quaked and the mountain shook.

Everyone was left stupefied. The princess profoundly sounded out, "It seems like we'll have to use our trump card." From the bundle on her

back, she drew out a simple and unadorned case. Opening up the case, she took out a glossy, dark black longbow.

Seeing the princess's movements, Chen Nan's pupils began to contract and his gaze was fixed onto that longbow.

"Houyi Bow!"

[T/N: 后羿/Hòuyì; a mythological Chinese archer.]

He didn't expect that after ten thousand years, he'd still be able to see Xianhuan Continent's godly bow. Houyi Bow easily had a number of owners. Ten thousand years ago, its last owner was precisely Chen Nan's father, Chen Zhan. That year, Chen Zhan relied on this bow to consecutively shoot dead three exceptional practitioners. This battle made his name famous and his power shook the entirety of Xianhuan Continent.

Chen Nan's lips quivered. He softly said, "Houyi Bow, I didn't think after ten thousand years I'd meet you again..."

Just then, a thundering, world-shaking sound came forth. Countless giant rocks tumbled from the volcano's mouth. The Monolithic Snake soared into the sky. The entire length of its one hundred zhang serpentine body was revealed.

## Volume 1 Chapter 4: Houyi Slaughtering Dragon

The Monolithic Snake's tail touched the ground. Its one hundred zhang serpentine body was held upright in the air. With intimidating might, it seemed to transform into a genuine dragon.

The princess conveniently fetched a plumed arrow and nocked it to the bowstring. Exhausting all her strength, she pulled the Houyi bowstring back slightly. The dark black Houyi Bow began to suffuse with a faint golden glow. The golden glow, like a haze, flowed from the bowstring to the plumed arrow. The otherwise ordinary iron transformed into the essence of pure gold. The ordinary plumed arrow emanated a golden glow before being shot as a golden ray.

The wind thundered and the world seemed to pale. The golden ray seemed to tear cracks into space. In the blink of an eye, it reached the Monolithic Snake. The Monolithic Snake was incomparably startled, as if it realized that the golden arrow embodied tremendous energy. It quickly dodged towards the ground. Its massive serpentine body tried to avoid the golden arrowhead capable of paling the world. The Monolithic Snake's entire serpentine body endlessly coiled at the mouth of the volcano.

The golden arrow brushed past the Monolithic Snake, discouraging everyone. However, with another thundering of the wind, the originally off-target golden arrow whistled back from the distance. The dazzling splendour of the arrowhead even overshadowed the celestial sun. In a flash, the golden arrow pierced into the Monolithic Snake's body.

"Pu!"

A wave of blood erupted from the Monolithic Snake's wound, and the sky above the mouth of the volcano was filled with the splattering of blood. The massive serpentine body incessantly thrashed and writhed on the ground launching a number of gigantic boulders every which way. The princess's party rushed to evade.

After ten or so minutes, the Monolithic Snake ceased its coiling. It once again lifted itself upright and raised its head ten or so zhang above the ground. It furiously stared at the princess, but seeing the Houyi Bow, it instinctively turned fearful.

The Monolithic Snake's serpentine body was cut open by the golden arrow, leaving a massive, bloody hole. Fresh blood chaotically poured out.

A magus-in-training said, "Your Highness the princess, use the Godly Bow again. Shooting its wound again will surely kill the Snake Demon."

"I can't, I've already used up all my strength shooting the Godly Bow once. Men, come here!"

Ten or so guards stepped forward, but none of them had the strength to pull back the bowstring of the Godly Bow.

Hiding behind a rock, Chen Nan had watched the events of battle unfold very clearly. At present, no one knew more about Houyi Bow than him. No one had the power to pull back the bowstring of the Godly Bow even the fraction of a degree. If the princess had the power to pull back the bowstring a little more, forget about the Monolithic Snake, even

monolithic dragons would find it hard to avoid misfortune. According to ancient legends, the Houyi Bow had shot down the gods of the heavens. It was Xianhuan Continent's number one immortal treasure.

The Monolithic Snake seemed to notice that no one could wield the frightening 'dark instrument' again. An ominous glint flashed in its eyes and, with a quick glance at the Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus in the volcano, it rushed forwards towards the nearby band of people.

Chen Nan sensed that the turn of events were not too encouraging and immediately fled down the mountain.

It was only now that the princess showed a true sense of panic. "I overestimated my own strength!"

All the guards shouted out, "Your Highness the princess, hurry and flee!"

The princess tied Houyi Bow to her back and with a deep look at everyone in front of her, turned around and fled down the mountain.

Currently, the Monolithic Snake was already swooping down, generating massive gusts of wind. In a flash, its monolithic serpentine body arrived in front of everyone. It shot out its blood-red forked tongue, just barely falling short of everyone. The three magi-in-training quickly raised their light blue protective screen. The Monolithic Snake used its skull to violently slam into the magical screen. In just a moment, the light blue screen shattered and the three magi-in-training vomited blood. All the guards were sent flying down the mountain by the Monolithic Snake's momentum.

The Monolithic Snake moved like lightning. In another flash, it overtook the tumbling guards. Two guards were crushed by its monolithic serpentine body, without the time to even cry out. Seeing this broke all the guards' courage. The Monolithic Snake didn't continue its attack on the other guards. With an ominous glint in its eyes, it shot forwards to the princess fleeing ahead.

At this very moment, Chen Nan felt his soul leave his body; the little demon was following closely behind him, with the Monolithic Snake in hot pursuit.

The princess repeatedly cried, "Ah~!"

Chen Nan loudly yelled behind him, "Little demon, what are you hollering about? Don't follow me like a bum beetle!"

[T/N: 跟屁蟲/bum beetle; meaning 'somebody who tags along'.]

"Degenerate, smelly thief, you dare talk to me like this? Sooner or later, I'll make you a palace eunuch! Ah~! The smelly snake is coming!" Now, the princess no longer had a calm and collected look. Instead, she was panicking.

Hearing the princess cry out in fear, all the guards ignored their injuries and unsheathed their swords, slashing at the body of the Monolithic Snake. Their ordinary iron swords weren't able to inflict even the slightest bit of damage to the Monolithic Snake. Its serpentine body twisted left and right, brutally crashing into the guards. The guards were sent flying away like scarecrows.

The Monolithic Snake had already reached the princess's back. It opened its massive blood-red mouth and breathed out fire. Scorching, raging flames swept towards the princess.

The princess looked absolutely terrified and ear-splittingly shrieked, "Ah~!"

When the flames reached the princess's back, Houyi Bow suddenly produced a faint golden glow, stopping the flames and scaring the Monolithic Snake to a halt.

At the same time, a whistle could be heard from afar. The sound rumbled like thunder and remained sounding in the air for a long time.

"Yu'er, don't panic, your teacher has come." The voice was deafening. It was even powerful enough to crush rocks and send them tumbling down the mountainside.

The sound blasted into Chen Nan's ears, almost making him stumble.

In a short moment, a spaciously-clothed, middle-aged man appeared a hundred zhang away.

"Wu... old fogey, why did you only come now? If you were late a single step, I would've been eaten by that smelly snake," the princess called out.

In addition to his excessive nervousness, Chen Nan's qi and blood were raging, forcing him to sit down.

"How could a voice be this ferocious? Could it be the Exterminating Roar Technique of the Azure Dragon? The little demon called him an old fogey. Could he be one of those rejuvenated, revitalized old guys?" He closely looked at the middle-aged man. In a flash, the old man covered the distance of over fifty zhang.

"Traversing that distance like it was an inch, his skill nears Dao! This old guy is really outstanding. It seems like his martial ability is at least at the level of a grandmaster." Chen Nan was inwardly apprehensive.

In an instant, the middle-aged man already reached the princess. The Monolithic Snake wasn't too far, gazing intently at this unexpected guest.

The middle-aged man seemed not to care about the Monolithic Snake. Patting the princess's head, he laughed, "Haha, did little girl suffer too much?"

"Annoying! Don't hit my head." The little demonic princess slapped the middle-aged man's hand to the side and pouted, "Hmph! Old fogey, did you arrive earlier and purposely hid to watch me and laugh?"

"If I had arrived earlier, could I helplessly watch you be chased and bitten by that little snake?"

"Fainting to the ground!" Chen Nan admired this well-matched master and disciple; he also described that colossal monster as 'little'.

"Hmph! Who knows if you're telling the truth or lying?"

At this time, the guards lucky enough to survive moved around the Monolithic Snake and staggeringly went over.

The middle-aged man profoundly said, "You guys keep far away from this volcano. If you can retreat farther, then retreat farther."

The princess wasn't too talkative as she led the seriously injured guards down the mountain. Of course, Chen Nan had already escaped without a trace. Unexpectedly, he once again met that terrible little demon.

"Hey, degenerate, smelly thief, stop! Or else after I'll peel off your skin after I capture you," the princess fiercely shouted.

Chen Nan suffered endlessly as her prisoner during the past few days. Now, he viciously cursed back, "You smelly princess, keep dreaming! Sooner or later I'll make you pay. I'll fucking..."

The guards that narrowly escaped death very much wanted to rush forward immediately and capture him, but they had no strength whatsoever with their serious injuries. They could only loudly chide and curse at him from afar. The princess had not once been insulted like this. She angrily clenched her teeth, her body trembling in anger. If she hadn't exhausted her strength, she would've already chased after Chen Nan and beat him senseless.

After several mishaps, Chen Nan arrived at the bottom of the mountain, ignoring the curses coming from behind him. He swiftly entered the depths of a nearby forest. He didn't leave as he wanted to watch the battle between the middle-aged man who had rushed over and the

Monolithic Snake. He concealed himself in a corner of the forest.

The Houyi Bow that frightened the Monolithic Snake had already been taken away by the princess, but the Monolithic Snake didn't launch its attack. It sensed that the feeble human in front of him was filled with boundless power. It uneasily twisted its serpentine body.

Facing the Monolithic Snake by himself, the little princess's teacher's imposing manner instantly changed. Now, he resembled the world's proudest giant. His face was brimming with confidence, without any sense of fear.

The Monolithic Snake reigned over all the creatures in its vicinity. In a several li circumference, not a single creature dared to take a step into his territory. However, in a short half a day's time, its authority was challenged. Now, the middle-aged man formidable manner was oppressing the snake, thoroughly enraging it. Blazing waves of fire erupted outward, hiding the sky and covering the earth, turbulently surging towards the middle-aged man.

The middle-aged man's body was like lightning. Leaving an afterimage, he dodged five zhang to the side, and then jumped up. He delivered a palm strike to the Monolithic Snake's previous wound. Waves of blood once again came spurting out.

The Monolithic Snake was unable to endure the tremendous pain and its upright serpentine body collapsed onto the ground. Its blood-red eyes flashed a deathly, cold gaze. Generating a massive gale, it swept its tail towards the middle-aged man. If this thrashing tail was set out onto the battlefield, it would cause total annihilation, not just in name only, but also in reality. With a loud rumble, rubble violently launched forward

and a sandstorm concealed the sky. The Monolithic Snake's 'total annihilation' left a gigantic ditch on the mountainside.

After the dust settled, the middle-aged man already surmounted the volcano's summit. The Monolithic Snake once again sat upright, its head at exactly the same height as mouth of the volcano. It fiercely took a bite at the middle-aged man.

The middle-aged man didn't dodge and continued to advance courageously. Two fists were brandished outward and a great white radiance shot forward from the clenched fists. The white radiance, as if it were a tangible material, slammed into the Monolithic Snake's bloody maw.

"Hong!"

A gargantuan sound echoed throughout the sky.

The Monolithic Snake flipped over in the sky and collapsed, causing another round of boulders to be launched. The middle-aged man was also pushed back by the tremendous recoil and slammed from one side of the volcanic mouth to the other, before free-falling to the ground.

Chen Nan praised in his heart, "This middle-aged man can actually rely on his strength alone to battle the one hundred zhang long Monolithic Snake. His cultivation definitely reaches sainthood."

Seeing the middle-aged man have enough power to battle the Monolithic Snake, the princess and the others hiding in the forest were

overjoyed.

The middle-aged man and the Monolithic Snake once again confronted each other. The middle-aged man relied on his lightning-like speed and excellent skill to target the Monolithic Snake's eyes and other weak points. The Monolithic Snake relied on its superior body to recklessly slam into the middle-aged man. One man and one snake flew around each other on the volcano. Massive rocks constantly tumbled down the mountain.

One man and one snake moved farther and farther away from the mouth of the volcano, until they eventually reached the base of the mountain. Chen Nan sensed that the situation wasn't too good and quickly slipped away. The princess and others also felt it wasn't right and hurriedly retreated one li.

Everyone backed off. The place they were originally hiding in was now the new battlefield. The middle-aged man and the Monolithic Snake had fought from the summit of the mountain to the base. Every time the middle-aged man brandished his fists, a brilliant white radiance would be produced. Every boulder and tree that it came into contact with was crushed.

The Monolithic Snake's destructive power was much greater than that of the middle-aged man. Every breath of raging fire would burn down a large area of forest, leaving it as scorched earth. Every 'total annihilation' move would topple much of the forest.

In less time than it takes to drink a cup of tea, the entire forest was razed to the ground.

Seeing this, Chen Nan trembled in fear. It wasn't like he'd never seen an exceptional expert – his own father was one of the most formidable of experts – but he's only seen such an intense battle a few times before.

The princess inwardly rejoiced. If that Monolithic Snake had unleashed its power like this to deal with them, then she'd probably be reporting to heaven. Of course, this was just her own wishful thinking; Chen Nan was convinced that she would be going to the netherworld to reunite with her devil brethren.

Currently, it seemed like the middle-aged man had the upper hand. His lightning-like figure repeatedly attacked the vicinity of the Monolithic Snake's previous wound. His fists and his white brilliance continued to bombard the same place over and over. The Monolithic Snake was battered and exhausted, its serpentine body unceasingly twisting.

The princess immediately cheered, "Teacher, add oil~! Quickly beat that smelly snake to death and avenge my bodyguards."

[T/N: 加油/add oil; a cheer meaning something like 'keep going!'/you can do it!']

"Aiyah~! Old fogey, you're so foolish, how could you let the smelly snake gain the upper hand. Did you get too arrogant hearing me cheer for you?"

"Old fogey, you're really too disappointing. Aiyah, truly foolish enough to die. How could you let that smelly snake burn your hair."

...

The middle-aged man peeled off some strands of burnt hair and rapidly retreated ten or so zhang.

"Teacher, you're such a coward! How could you run away?"

Chen Nan sniggered. The middle-aged man had this kind of demonic disciple. It was truly his life's misfortune.

The middle-aged man gasped in a gulp of air and called out, "Little girl, don't randomly speak up. If you keep disturbing me, when I return, I'll punish you and make you face the wall for a hundred days."

"Isn't family supposed to encourage you?"

"..."

Without the 'irritant', the middle-aged man's power raised greatly, while the Monolithic Snake was beaten dispirited and listless. Everyone thought that he had victory in his grasp, but the Monolithic Snake's tail suddenly shot out like lightning and wrapped around the middle-aged man's waist, lifting him up to a high altitude. Although only the thinnest part of the Monolithic Snake's tail was wound only once around him, the middle-aged man's entire chest and abdomen was being constricted.

The princess cried out in fear, pushing passed her guards and running forward.

The middle-aged man struggled with all his might. His whole body became suffused with a faint white light. The radiance grew richer and more powerful and the grip on his body from the snake tail gradually loosened. In a moment, he escaped from the Monolithic Snake's entanglement, but at the same time, the fierce snake head opened its giant blood-red maw to take a bite of him. He hastily brandished his two fists and struck outward. His blazing white fists stopped the fierce snake head in its tracks, but the loose snake tail once again tightened around him.

The princess rushed forward and arrived less than ten zhang away from the Monolithic Snake. She chokingly sobbed, "Teacher... wu..."

"Yu'er, don't cry. Teacher is all right. This little snake hasn't taken my life yet."

"Teacher, take Houyi Bow," said the princess, who then tossed the Houyi Bow and a plumed arrow into the sky.

"Wu... teacher, I'm sorry. I wanted to see your real strength, so I didn't give Houyi Bow to you earlier. Wuwu..." The princess began to cry again.

"Yu'er, don't be afraid. This little snake can't deal with teacher. Now that I have Houyi Bow in my hands, it's dead," the middle-aged man said as he smashed his fists towards the fierce snake head. The fists radiated blazing white light and forced the snake head back a distance of three zhang. He extended both his hands and released a soft white ray of light, bringing Houyi Bow and the plumed arrow into his hands.

"Yu'er, back up. I'm afraid I'll injure you."

The princess saw the middle-aged man receive Houyi Bow and calmed down. She turned and ran away.

After the Monolithic Snake saw Houyi Bow, it actually showed fear and moved its snake head away seven, eight zhang.

The middle-aged man's body vigorously radiated. Once he nocked the plumed arrow properly, he used his absolute full strength to pull back the bowstring and shouted, "Open!" To his shock, the bowstring didn't move a whisker.

"Yu'er, did someone previously use Houyi Bow?" yelled out the middle-aged man.

"Yes, old fogey. That bloody hole on the smelly snake's body was from when I shot it. Are you happy this time, I can finally pull back the Godly Bow."

"What? You little muddlehead, Houyi Bow can only be used once a year. You really killed me this time."

"Ah... teacher... wu..."

The Monolithic Snake seemed to notice that the middle-aged man was incapable of using the Godly Bow and fiercely chomped towards him. The middle-aged man swung Houyi Bow. The dark back of Houyi Bow clashed with the thick white teeth, causing several of the half-meter venomous

fangs to be blown off in a cloud of blood. The Monolithic Snake endured the pain and slashed at the middle-aged man with great strength, sending him flying.

The middle-aged man, battered and exhausted, flipped in the air and fell onto the ground. He took a long gulp of air, gripped the Godly Bow, and rushed forward toward the Monolithic Snake.

Chen Nan was slack-jawed and wide-eyed watching the princess's teacher unexpectedly use Houyi Bow as a club. It truly pained his heart.

"This crazy man would go as far as to... he's recklessly wasting heaven's gifts!"

[T/N: 暴殄天物/recklessly waste heaven's gifts; meaning 'wantonly wasting resources'.]

The princess's brows were raised in delight, eyes laughing. "Haha, old fogey is really amusing!"

The middle-aged man leapt up and with a black flash, the Monolithic Snake's scales as hard as steel essence were crushed into pieces by Houyi Bow. Blood gracefully rained. The Monolithic Snake was furious and its entire serpentine body twisted and turned. Its massive tail swept across and chopped down. The earth quaked.

What could be done? The princess's teacher's figure was like lightning, sometimes dodging, sometimes delivering deadly blows. Wielding Houyi Bow, he continuously attacked, bashing the Monolithic Snake until it was drenched in blood.

The Monolithic Snake suddenly stopped. Its upright serpentine body began to emit a dim golden light. An astonishing change occurred to the Monolithic Snake's body. The multi-coloured scales on its serpentine body transformed into golden scales. Four protrusions appeared on its abdomen. A pair of sparkling gold antlers sprouted on its head. The roar of a dragon thundered from the Monolithic Snake's mouth, shaking the highest of the heavens. Powerful dragon qi emanated from the Monolithic Snake's body. In a one hundred li circumference, every creature cowered on the ground.

Everyone was stupefied.

"A dragon! I've finally seen a dragon of legends!" Chen Nan excitedly called out.

The princess alarmingly shouted, "Heavens! We've been battling a dragon!"

While everyone was in their stupor, the princess's teacher however was mournful. Only he knew that the Monolithic Snake hadn't yet successfully completed its transformation; its dragon claws still hadn't extended out from its abdomen. A dragon failing to successfully transform meant only one thing – death.

He quietly said, "Brother Snake, I apologize. I thought your cultivation as a Snake Spirit was without merit. I never thought you were this proud, cultivating a genuine dragon body for thousands of years. If you weren't still stuck at such a pivotal point in your draconic transformation, I think we would've died without having burial sites."

The golden scales on the Monolithic Snake's body began to peel off. The blood and meat now exposed by the peeling scales were indistinct. The Monolithic Snake gave a solemn, draconic roar. It spat out a spangling neidan which abruptly exploded in the air into a shower of dispersing golden specks. After failing its draconic transformation, the Monolithic Snake transformed into a golden ray of light that shot into the mouth of the volcano. In the blink of an eye, no one remained inside the volcano.

[T/N: 血肉模糊/the blood and meat were indistinct; meaning 'badly mutilated/mangled'.]

The princess's teacher was disappointed and frustrated, as if he had failed. If he had killed an ordinary Snake Spirit, he would by no means feel such an incomparable sense of loss. But he had killed a Divine Snake that had the promise to transform into a dragon. He had a heavy heart.

"What's right? What's wrong? Perhaps this world never had a difference between right and wrong," he sighed.

With a heavy heart, the middle-aged man arrived at the mouth of the volcano. He flew down to the Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus and plucked off a single petal. Then, he ripped up the entire plant and threw it into the depths of the volcano.

"Brother Snake, this was probably the will of heaven. If the Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus matured an hour earlier, maybe you would've already finished your draconic transformation. That Immortal Lotus will protect your soul from extinguishing. I hope you can cultivate into a genuine dragon in your next life."

Currently, the princess and everyone had already run forward. "Master, what happened just now? How did that smelly snake transform into a dragon?"

The middle-aged man replied, "You saw wrong. How could it transform into a dragon?"

"It was a dragon. Everyone clearly saw it was a dragon. You guys speak, just now you saw it was a dragon, right?" the princess asked the guards.

"It was a dragon."

"Right, it was a dragon."

"It was definitely a dragon. I saw it very clearly."

...

The guards all confirmed.

The middle-aged man indifferently said, "When people are too tense, they will see illusions. Just now, you guys were too tense."

The princess replied, "Hmph! Old fogey, you're acting so weird today. You must be keeping something secret from me."

The middle-aged man laughed, "You little girl, you always love to let

your imagination run wild. Here, this is the Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus you wanted to pluck."

"Ah, why is it only a single petal?"

"You're really too greedy. This grade of Immortal Lotus, getting just one petal is already not bad. The rest of the Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus already fell down into the depths of the volcano."

"Ai, that's a pity," sighed the princess.

"Ai, teacher, what about that snake? Was it killed by you?"

"It already died under Houyi Bow."

"Oh. Old fogey, you're really too weird today. You clearly killed a dragon – no – a Monolithic Snake. Why are you still so dispirited and dejected?" The princess blinked her two big eyes and took a deep look at the middle-aged man.

The middle-aged man pinched her nose and changed the subject, laughing, "Little girl, you'd unexpectedly escape from the imperial palace. You don't know that you almost worried your father the emperor to death."

"Annoying," the princess swatted the middle-aged man's hand away, "I came out to look for the Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus for father. It's his sixtieth birthday; I wanted to give the Immortal Lotus to him as a gift. He'll definitely be super happy."

"You little girl, you're really too crazy. Don't you know your way of doing things is much too dangerous? How could you..."

"Alright, alright, I know. You don't have to act as my grandmother and nag me. Teacher, I've heard others say that in your youth, you were secretly in love with my grandmother, is it true?" the princess badly joked.

"You... you don't change the subject."

The princess giggled, "Right, I'll follow your orders. Your disciple will immediately return to the imperial palace."

The middle-aged man looked helpless and said, "You're too naughty, I'm not sure if you'll return smoothly."

The princess gave him an odd look, "Old fogey, aren't you going back with me?"

The middle-aged man replied, "After finding you, I intended to make you comply and 'escort' you back, but when I was on the road, I heard someone say that in the Luofeng Mountain Range, a mythical qilin appeared. This is an unusual matter so I need to go take a look, but I'm worrying about you!"

"Isn't that the qilin of legends? Does this world really have a qilin?" The princess's two eyes shone and her face was filled with excitement. "I want to go too."

"No. You've already been gone from the imperial palace for more than a month. Your mother the empress is worried for your wellbeing and has fallen ill. You immediately return."

"Ah, my mother's ill? Then fine, I'll return right away." The princess looked disappointed.

The middle-aged man returned Houyi Bow to the princess and said, "Yu'er, how could you snatch Houyi Bow? You should know that this is the Empire of Chu's national treasure. Its use is to act as deterrence against the experts of other countries."

"What's wrong, didn't I only borrow it for a while? It's not like I won't bring it back," the princess said, not in the least bit concerned.

"You truly don't know what's good for you. The Godly Bow was sealed and can only be used once a year. How could you needlessly use it like that? Fortunately the Chu Empire isn't currently in a war so it doesn't need to be used."

"I know~!" The princess dragged on and on that last syllable.

# Volume 1 Chapter 5: Secret Battle

The Monolithic Snake's draconic transformation failed within sight of success. The instant its neidan shattered, thousands of golden specks showered the entire area. Who would've thought that one of those golden specks would fly away into the distance.

The golden speck penetrated through countless forests before landing. A golden pearl with a lustre that seized the eyes tumbled to Chen Nan's feet. He clearly observed all this happen. Excitedly, he crouched down and collected the golden pearl. The golden pearl's splendour flowed and produced an auspicious and peaceful radiance, freeing his mind entirely from worries. Chen Nan could be said to have profound knowledge pertaining to the legends of dragons. The golden pearl before his eyes was not an unknown secret to him.

Although the Monolithic Snake failed its draconic transformation, when all was said and done, it still reached the state of being a half-dragon. Its body contained tremendous power. Half of the stored power had the attributes of a snake; the other half had the attributes of a dragon. When the neidan shattered, the snake portion dissipated, but the concentrated dragon portion remained. The pure dragon essence coalesced to form a Dragon Pearl.

"Dragon Pearl! This is really a Dragon Pearl!" Chen Nan exclaimed in surprise.

Although the Dragon Pearl wasn't very bulky, it held the pure essence and tremendous power of a dragon. This was indeed a priceless treasure.

Chen Nan was very well-versed in the function of this pearl. Within the span of two hours, the Dragon Pearl would activate. If it were to be swallowed in this time, and one were capable of withstanding tremendous draconic attack deposited within, then one could absorb 30% to 40% of the essence of the Dragon Pearl thereby attaining supreme power throughout their body. If no person or creature swallowed the Dragon Pearl in this two hour timeframe, it would begin to rapidly lose its lustre. The tremendous draconic power was all concentrated in the pearl's nucleus. The Dragon Pearl's outer shell was incomparably hard; weapons that were below the level of immortal treasures were virtually unable to do any damage to it. This also meant that the tremendous draconic power stored within the Dragon Pearl couldn't be so easily absorbed as one would wish.

Ten thousand years ago, Chen Nan's clan decided to make him into a powerful practitioner, but no matter how much he cultivated, he did not improve. His pathetic power was the origin of his suffering. All along, he thirsted for incredible power. Although an opportunity has appeared in front of him, he hesitated. But he wasn't afraid of being unable to withstand the backlash containing tremendous draconic power and blowing himself up. At this moment, he recalled a conversation he once had with his father.

Chen Zhan said, "Perhaps divine treasures have the capacity to allow someone to obtain formidable power and become an exceptional expert, but there are definitely repercussions. When one receives the power that they've yearned for in their dreams, they'll also forever lose their qualifications to become the very strongest. Power that comes externally hinders and restrains one's development; they'll never be capable of breaking through this restraint."

Chen Nan said, "But even if one can't become the very strongest, becoming an exceptional expert is already pretty good."

Chen Zhan replied, "If one has the capability of withstanding the tremendous spiritual attack from a divine treasure, then they are not ordinary. Besides requiring an excellent physique, one must also have an unyielding heart. How could this kind of person endure the torment of never being able to fulfil their dreams for a lifetime? In the end, they'll only cause themselves ruin."

Chen Nan asked, "Never? Isn't this too extreme?"

Chen Zhan replied, "The strong aren't afraid of loneliness. They're only afraid of being stuck and not moving forward on their path to power."

Even if Chen Nan didn't fully agree with the point of view of his father Chen Zhan, he felt that there must be a justification for this.

"If I swallow this, maybe I'll instantly become a powerful practitioner, or maybe my body will immediately explode and I'll die. But regardless of the outcome, I'll still lose the qualifications to become the very strongest."

Chen Nan laughed at himself. "For someone like me whose progress in martial arts has stagnated, maybe taking this Dragon Pearl is my best option. After all, this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for a carp to leap through the dragon gate."

[T/N: 龍門/dragon gate; a mythical gate where a carp can transform

into a dragon.]

"Could Heaven possibly grant me charity?"

Chen Nan lowered his head and looked at the flowing splendour of the Dragon Pearl in his possession. He hesitated for a long time. Finally, he exclaimed, "Indeed, I'm truly unwilling! I, Chen Nan, don't need 'charity'!"

Remembering past events, Chen Nan felt some sense of loss.

Before he was sixteen years old, he was once acclaimed by others as a genius in studying the martial way. His martial arts cultivation progressed a thousand li in a single day. Among his peers, he was fit to be given the title as 'the best'. But afterwards, his nightmare began. His cultivation wouldn't improve no matter how diligent he was, so much that the Mahayana of his ancestral profound skill dropped from the second Chongtian down to the rank of first Chongtian. Each and every one of his peers surpassed him. He was beyond pained in his heart. His bitterness and agony reached an excessive level. Perhaps such a huge decline in his martial arts cultivation was related to some 'external reasons', but this was just his vague conjecture. Still, his suffering did nothing to help him ascertain the truth.

[T/N: 一日千里/one day, a thousand li; meaning 'rapid progress'.]

After the halo of being a genius slipped away from him, the sound of constant taunting and ridicule followed him closely, but he was unable to say a thing in return. The public opinion of the outside world, the mission set forth by his clan... the immense pressure was like a heavy mountain pressing down on his heart. His powerlessness resulted in him regarding himself as a nobody, undeserving of being born into that kind of prestigious family.

From the time when he was sixteen years old until he was twenty years old, he grew tired of living, to the extent that he'd go over in his mind ways of suicide. During this time, his heart was full of loss. But a certain kind of conviction was hidden in the deepest crevices of his heart all along. He was firmly convinced that there would be a day he'd finally be able to have a breakthrough and overcome his restraints, smashing the barrier that continuously obstructed him from improving upon his cultivation. This was the relentless power of cultivating his ancestral profound skill.

After his rebirth ten thousand years later, Chen Nan's martial cultivation remained at a standstill, but the heavy pressure from his clan was thoroughly gone. After going through a year of readjustments, he already assimilated into modern society. He already liberated himself from all that pain and suffering, recovering his former nature.

"Maybe today I missed a chance that's hard to come across even in a thousand years, but I won't regret it!"

The originally flowing splendour of the Dragon Pearl gradually dulled, until the radiance completely died. Its colour changed from golden to a dark green, becoming an ordinary pearl.

Chen Nan carefully put away the Dragon Pearl and followed the road back. He didn't want to stop and rest anywhere, fearing the little demonic princess would catch up and come annoy him again. He scaled a high mountain and gazed into the distance. The princess's party was still at the mouth of the volcano. He let out a long breath of air and said, "Hu~ I finally managed to escape from the nightmare of the little demon."

Chen Nan already travelled for three days away from the mountain before he came to an embarrassing realization: he was lost. The never-ending mountain range was boundless. If he couldn't find a way back, he'd have no other choice but to live as a savage in the mountains.

A thread of light smoke ascended up into the sky in spirals from a distant mountainous forest. Chen Nan was jubilant as he went onwards in search. When the light smoke was a hundred zhang away, he stopped. He didn't dare to advance rudely and impetuously. If by any chance it was the princess's group, then he'd die without a proper burial site.

But good luck seemed to always avoid Chen Nan. On the third day in the afternoon, he was following the group of people not too closely and not too slowly when suddenly the figures of seven or eight people appeared from all sides around him, encircling him. From their penetrating glares, one could see that every one of them was an expert. From their bodies, chilling cold murderous qi emanated. One could imagine that everyone here has experienced the battles of life and death.

All the people in front retreated a few steps. Altogether, there were twenty or so people. They were led by a young man. He appeared to be quite handsome. His body emanated domineering aggressiveness. He sized up Chen Nan and frowned. "Who are you? Why are you sneakily following us?"

Chen Nan explained, "I'm a lost hunter. I wanted to follow you so that I'd be able to leave this mountain."

"A hunter dares to enter the depths of this mountain range?"

"I was hunting a white deer when I unwittingly charged here. In the end, I couldn't find the way back."

The young noble faced a tall, sturdy, big man standing at the side and instructed, "You, go."

Seeing the young noble command his subordinate in that manner showed that he was someone who was used to giving orders. Chen Nan guessed that this young noble was someone who held great influence.

The big man wielded in his hand a large sword, both broad and long. After going over to Chen Nan, he chopped down towards him. Chen Nan hastily ducked out of the way towards the side, leaving the big man's sword to chop empty space. When the second sword strike was dispatched, the blade produced a light cyan radiance, stabbing towards Chen Nan's stomach.

Chen Nan shouted in his mind, "No way, tangible sword qi! This is a grandmaster level expert! How could this kind of person be willing to serve as another's subordinate?"

Despite his shock, he managed to dodge the strike just in time.

"Chi!"

The light cyan blade hacked a shallow ditch into the ground.

Chen Nan felt that something was amiss. The might of tangible sword qi couldn't possibly be this puny. Even ordinary sword qi is much stronger than this, by quite a lot at that.

"Could it be western battle qi?" He took a careful look at the big man's sword handling, reaffirming his assumption.

The big man viciously chopped towards him again. Chen Nan met the big man head on in battle. Battle qi received battle qi. The light cyan blade caused Chen Nan to enter a danger zone.

The young noble standing at the side sneered. "Ordinary hunters have good martial arts like yours? If you keep refusing to tell the truth, then you'll be left without a burial site after ten moves."

Chen Nan hurriedly yelled, "Stop, I'll speak."

The young noble clapped his hands and ordered, "Stop."

The big man sheathed his sword and said to Chen Nan, "Okay. Boy, you can actually receive over twenty of my moves."

Chen Nan used the language of the continent ten thousand years ago to sigh, "No matter the age, it's the strong that are respected. After my martial cultivation deteriorated, I was doomed to go through all kinds of unhappy experiences. A tiger that falls to an equal playing field is bullied by a dog!"

[T/N: 虎落平陽被犬欺/a tiger that falls to an equal playing field is

bullied by a dog; meaning something like 'when a hero loses their power, they are easily bullied by villains/others'.]

He quickly contemplated before saying, "Young noble, if I say I'm a hunter who has learned martial arts, you definitely won't believe me, but I can give you proof."

The young noble asked, "You have proof?"

"I'm a hunter. It's only natural that I have the skills of a huntsman as proof." Chen Nan kneeled over and scratched at the ground, exposing a handful of sandy soil. He gave it a sniff and said, "I dare to say that I'm certain that within a circumference of three li, other than a female tiger, there are no other large wild animals."

"Oh, are you sure you're certain?" the young noble asked.

"I'm certain."

"Good. Yang Chong, go bring a few men with you and take a look around the vicinity."

A young man answered, "Yes." He guided a few men and entered the depths of the forest to look around.

In the time it takes to drink a cup of tea, the roar of a tiger could be heard coming from the distance. A few men soon returned, towing a dead tiger back with them.

The young man took a glance at the dead tiger, gave an unenthusiastic laugh, and said, "Well, it seems you really are a hunter, but I'm still somewhat in doubt. From here, it takes three days moving at a quick pace to leave. Don't tell me that you chased a white deer for three days and three nights?" With that said, the young man's tone turned cold. He shouted, "Grab him and tie him up for me."

Several experts rushed forwards and pressed their sharp blades at various vital points on Chen Nan's body. If he wished to put up a resistance by his lonesome against this many experts, then no doubt he'd be like an ant trying to shake a tree, so he didn't struggle. He gave a bitter laugh in his heart. He just recently escaped from the evil clutches of the princess. Now he's already the captive of someone else.

[T/N: 蚩蜉撼樹/an ant trying to shake a tree; meaning 'to overestimate oneself'.]

One of the young noble's subordinates said, "Third... Third Master, why tie him up? Instead, we can directly kill him and just leave it be."

Even before the words 'Third Master' were spoken, Chen Nan already thought he had a certain 'flavour' to him. Now, he was even more certain that man was by no means ordinary.

The young noble said, "Detain him first. I feel that this individual isn't ordinary. Before he was attacked, I actually didn't recognize him as a martial artist."

Chen Nan began his second time living as a captive, but this time, his 'treatment' was clearly much better than the first. At the very least, no one treated him as their own personal property and made him 'convey

his feelings of excitement'. This group of people were vigorously disciplined; they didn't speak too many superfluous words. Only that young noble would occasionally quietly say a few sentences to those beside him.

Two days later, Chen Nan couldn't help but lament his miraculous fate. He unexpectedly got to meet the princess again. Now, only ten people remained in the princess's party. During the confrontation with the Monolithic Snake, they lost in total four imperial guards and two magi-in-training. The few survivors suffered serious injuries and had not yet healed.

When the princess saw the young noble and his group, she stammered in alarm and slightly puckered her brows, but in a flash, she displayed her splendid smile. "Tianyuan Continent is truly too small. It's hard to imagine that we'd encounter each other here, Your Highness the Third Prince."

A smiling expression was evident across the young noble's whole face. "Right. I also didn't expect to see Your Highness Princess Yu here."

The princess laughed. "For what reason did Third Prince leave his comfortable life in Baiyue Empire and come to our Chu Empire's border? Are you serving as an ambassador to our country? As an ambassador to our country, it doesn't seem like you'd need to run so deep into the mountains."

The nearby Chen Nan could hear this all very clearly. He couldn't help but sigh. For a while now, he'd been in these boundless mountains. Unexpectedly, he'd encounter both a princess and a prince.

The Third Prince said, "Princess Yu's words are still so sharp. The title of 'intruding upon another country's borders as he wishes' is a label that I can't bear. If I recall correctly, the zone in the middle of Tianyuan Continent, this mountain range, shouldn't be considered the territory of any nation."

The princess replied, "Your Highness the Third Prince has thousands of matters to attend to a day, why would you run to this place for no cause and no reason? After all, this place is encroaching on the borders of my Chu Empire; I can't help but have misgivings in my heart."

The Third Prince laughed, "Hehe, Princess Yu is too anxious. Actually, I specifically came to pay a visit to this place with the main goal of gathering news about the mythical qilin that has apparently appeared in this Luofeng Mountain Range. I wish to try my luck and see if I can't get a glimpse of a mythical animal of legends."

The princess said, "Oh, so it's like this. I didn't expect news to spread this quickly. Even the distant Baiyue Empire's Third Prince knows."

The Third Prince said, "A legendary qilin has graced us with its divine presence. The appearance of a mythical beast naturally shocks the world. This matter has already caused the continent lots of commotion."

The princess sighed, "Ai! I really want to see for myself what kind of beast a qilin is. It's a pity I won't have the opportunity."

Surprised, The Third Prince asked, "Your Highness the princess, why do you say such a thing?"

"When we were travelling to the Luofeng Mountain Range, we came across my teacher on the way. He said it's too dangerous there and stubbornly drove me back. I'm so disappointed!" The princess was extremely angry.

A bright light flashed across the Third Prince's eyes. He said, "Don't tell me it's Elder Zhuge Chengfeng."

"It's precisely that old fogey."

"Elder Zhuge's name moves the world. His martial cultivation reaches the level of sainthood. He's the senior, the number one expert, that I revere the most."

"Is that right? If you let that old fogey here that, he'd definitely be joyous. I can't say for sure, but maybe he'd be willing to accept you as his disciple."

"If it's really as you say, then it's what I seek but fail to get."

[T/N: 求之不得/seek but fail to get; meaning 'exactly what one's been looking for'.]

The princess smiled. "Maybe this old fogey can already hear you, but is debating whether or not to actually take you in as his disciple."

A bewildered look flashed across the Third Prince's face. He laughed, "Hehe, how could that be? Isn't Elder Zhuge hurrying towards the Luofeng Mountain Range? Even if senior's martial arts is godly, isn't it impossible to hear words several hundred kilometres away?"

The princess panted with rage. "This old fogey isn't assured that I'll return to the palace; he's scared I'll sneak back. He's been following me all along."

"Oh, apparently senior really loves you dearly, afraid that you'll come across a mishap." The Third Prince smiled.

"Clearly he doesn't trust me."

The Third Prince took a look at the princess's imperial guards and said, "Princess Yu, did your subordinates suffer injuries? Why are all their expressions so deathly pale?"

"That's right. When we were on the road to the Luofeng Mountain Range, we had a run in with an ancient giant. Fortunately, old fogey immediately hurried over. Otherwise, it would've really been too dangerous." A trace of lingering fear remained on the princess's face.

"Truly fortunate! En, beasts are constantly on the prowl in this mountain range. Without some experts to protect you, you really can't travel safely. How about this, I'll escort you guys out of the mountain." The Third Prince had a sincere expression.

A cold light flashed across the princess's eyes, but she smiled, "Thank you Your Highness the Third Prince, but we won't trouble you. My old, crafty teacher will look after us well."

"Your Highness Princess Yu, there's no need to be so courteous with me.

Having had the chance to bump into you, extra feelings and reasons are useless. Regarding this matter, I must escort Your Highness safely. Moreover, Elder Zhuge is not necessarily following you all the way."

"I appreciate Third Prince's kindness, but we really don't require your escort. This is already the edge of the mountain range; there are almost no beasts here."

"That won't do. I must escort you out. Otherwise, my heart will be restless."

The princess didn't decline further. With a grateful look, she said, "Then I'll have to thank you for your trouble, Third Prince."

"Princess Yu, you're too courteous."

Chen Nan saw this all very clearly. He secretly sighed. These two were worthy of being born in royal families, colluding hearts and butting corners. In this short amount of time, they already finished a 'battle of minds'.

[T/N: 勾心鬥角/colluding hearts and butting corners; meaning 'to fight and scheme against one another'.]

The princess, leading her imperial guards who were currently seriously injured, felt rather uneasy after meeting with the Third Prince of the Empire of Baiyue. She wasn't convinced that this was a chance encounter. The biggest possibility was that her counterpart had been stationed here waiting for her for a long time. For the purpose of self-preservation, she took an overbearing attitude and took the initiative to attack first, making the Third Prince unsure of her actual situation. After that, the topic of

Zhuge Chengfeng was inadvertently raised, resulting in the Third Prince feeling rather apprehensive. However, the Third Prince was absolutely not an ordinary contemporary. Although he was left a bit bewildered, he didn't cower. Rather, he wanted to follow her, trying to make inquiries into her real situation. These two could speak 'a mouthful of lies', 'only talking rubbish'.

The Third Prince and the princess moved their respective parties together out of the mountain. Chen Nan walked behind the troops, secretly glad. Luckily, the Third Prince was bothering the princess, causing her to be unable to notice him hiding behind the troops. But a good thing doesn't last forever. The little demon's subordinates, her imperial guards, were quick to discover him, a bound captive. One of the guards dashed to the front and whispered a few things into the little demon's ears.

At that time, Chen Nan felt darkness shroud the earth. The sky began to lose its colour.

Excitement was across the princess's whole face. She gleefully laughed and walked over to Chen Nan. This was definitely the first time she had expressed her true emotions since encountering the Third Prince, but Chen Nan would rather see her phony smile instead. He didn't want to see a true, heart-felt smile from her at this time.

He shouted loudly in his heart, "Demons of the netherworld, hurry and collect your offspring!"

At first, the Third Prince didn't understand why the princess of the Empire of Chu would suddenly become so excited. He couldn't help but inwardly suspect that Zhuge Chengfeng was nearby. Afterwards, he

followed the princess's line of sight and finally found the 'root' of the princess's excitement. To his surprise, it was their captive from the day before yesterday.

The Third Prince was startled. He began to carelessly guess what the identity of Chen Nan was. With a cough, he said, "From the beginning, this person sneakily followed us. Afterwards, he was captured by my subordinates. Your Highness the princess, do you recognize this person?"

"I recognize him. Of course I recognize him." The princess gnashed her teeth. "He's a little eunuch I brought with me from my palace. Originally, he was meant to serve me, but I didn't expect he'd be the first to flee when we encountered an ancient giant. Little Plum, you didn't expect to see me again so soon, right?"

For him to become known as a palace eunuch, Chen Nan was simply dazed.

The princess very fiercely stared at him. Her meaning couldn't be clearer: she was threatening him and threatening him again to make him cooperate.

When one is underneath the eaves, they have no choice but to bow their head. Chen Nan hesitated, but for lack of a better option, said, "Your Highness the princess, please punish me."

The Third Prince smiled. "So it's Princess Yu's slave. Your Highness, please punish him as you wish." With that, he turned around and left.

"Heiheihei..." The princess looked at Chen Nan, a smiling expression on her face.

Chen Nan's body turned cold. He lowered his voice and said, "Your Highness the princess, let's make a business deal."

The princess recalled Chen Nan's previous obscenities. The anger caused her body to shudder. She shrewdly said, "Make a business deal with me? Why? You must be dreaming."

"Zhuge Chengfeng isn't actually here and the Third Prince wants to deal with you," Chen Nan quickly wrote out on the princess's palm.

The princess moved her palm away and carefully looked him up and down. She said, "It seems that I truly underestimated you. I didn't expect you smelly thief to have some brains. But – my heart isn't in the best of moods right now. Let's delay the business deal. Right now, I want to vent my anger!"

"Ah~!" The sound of Chen Nan's miserable screams echoed through the forest. Sometimes, his screams were mixed with the sounds of the little demonic princess's laughter. The distant Third Prince and his party looked at each other in dismay. They gained some unwanted insights into the rumoured little witch.

The bright full moon hanged in the horizon. Bright moonlight, like immaculate feathers, covered a wide expanse of the forest. The night breeze blew gently, carrying with it the delicate fragrance of flowers and plants. The entire mountainous forest was shrouded under a rain of moonlight. Gazing into the distance, it was silent, hazy, harmonious, and

serene.

Chen Nan, with a bloody nose and a swollen face, and the princess were currently exchanging ideas with low voices in a tent. The two of them already ascertained that the chance meeting with the Third Prince and his party in the forest was absolutely not incidental. This was all premeditated. These people have been stationed here waiting for a long time on the exit road.

The princess said, "At first, my intuition told me that they want to harm me. But I don't understand why they have this kind of motive."

Chen Nan asked, "How is the relationship between Baiyue Empire and the Chu Empire?"

The princess answered, "For the past few years, the relationship between the two countries could be considered pretty good. No unpleasant matters have arisen."

"This is strange. If it's like this, why would they want to harm princess?" Chen Nan pondered for a moment. He smiled and said, "I understand. They want to plunder you here."

"Drop dead." The princess gave Chen Nan a ferocious beating.

Chen Nan ate his pain and said in a low voice, "Aren't I helping Your Highness the princess analyze the situation? How could Your Highness the princess get this emotional? Besides, it's not like this can't be a possibility."

"You don't have to consider this aspect. Anyone who knows the Third Prince knows that he doesn't live a dissipated lifestyle."

Chen Nan said, "Maybe... maybe he wants to Your Highness the princess to serve as a gift for someone else."

Hearing Chen Nan compare her to a gift, the little demonic princess angrily glowered at him with round eyes. She coldly said, "You degenerate. The words you say are way too vulgar. Don't you know who you're talking to?" But she quickly calmed down shortly after. She muttered to herself irresolutely, "The possibility is nearly zero."

"This is strange. Other than Your Highness the princess, what else is capable of making the Third Prince take a risk out of desperation? Wait a minute..."

"Houyi Bow!"

"Houyi Bow!"

Chen Nan and the princess called out together. They both simultaneously came to realize the truth.

"On that day when Your Highness the princess used Houyi Bow to shoot dead the Monolithic Snake, the golden arrow streaked across the vast sky. It must've been seen by the Third Prince."

"No wonder this guy kept stealing glances at the case on my back. To go as far as to plot and steal Houyi Bow, our country's treasure, he really deserves to die." The princess clenched her little fists and said, "Degenerate, you still haven't come up with a plan yet?"

"You can't blame me for this too. The cleverest housewife can't cook without rice. Your Highness the princess, your guards are already seriously hurt. Right now, we can't use soldiers, what can I possibly do? I think we should directly give Houyi Bow to the Third Prince and leave it at that. This is called having a clear view of things... heihei." Seeing a cold sneer begin to form at the corner of the little demonic princess's mouth, Chen Nan quickly stopped talking, forcing a smile.

[T/N: 巧婦難為無米之炊/the cleverest housewife can't cook without rice; meaning 'you can't do anything without the proper equipment'.]

"You degenerate, you boast so shamelessly during the daytime saying you want to strike a business deal with me. In the end, you didn't help at all. Heihei, this is also alright; I can sort you out without any misgivings now. You don't know how exhausting it was looking for you these past two days. I've been itching to immediately strip off your skin."

Seeing the princess's sinister smile, Chen Nan couldn't refrain from breaking out into a cold shudder. "Your Highness the princess, at that time, I didn't intend to peep at you... bathing..."

Hearing these words, the princess's two eyes practically spouted fire. "Ah, you degenerate should die. You still dare to talk about... I'll kill you!"

## Volume 1 Chapter 6: Panicked Bloody Battle

"Wait a minute." Chen Nan hurriedly drew back. "Your Highness the princess, you're too merciless. Earlier today, I clearly knew that you and your group of subordinates were vulnerable and weak; nevertheless, I was too honourable to just abandon you guys, so I came over to help. How can you still treat me like this?"

"Heihei. Smelly thief, you really are smooth. You've known all along that after the Third Prince makes his move, he'll definitely kill you to silence you. Otherwise, how else would you be brave enough to ask for a deal with me at that time?"

"Hai... this... because it's like this, you have more of a reason not to kill me. Your guards are already seriously injured. In any case, I still have some strength left to fight."

The princess mumbled to herself. Seeing his smile, she said, "Alright. Since it's like this, I'll let you off the hook for now. Here, it's on my back."

Seeing the princess hand over the case fitted with Houyi Bow to him, Chen Nan cried out, "Don't! Just kill me instead." He knew that the princess was already firm in her decision. Her plan was to divert everyone's attention onto Chen Nan by having him carry Houyi Bow while she looked for an opportunity to escape on her own.

"Alright, I'll kill you." The princess unsheathed a length of her sword.

"No, don't! I'll do it."

On that tranquil night, the urge to kill was latent in the forest. Traces of moonlight reflected off blades at the Third Prince's tent. At the moment, he and his subordinates were quietly plotting.

The leader of the Third Prince's subordinates, Yang Chong, said, "We were fooled during the day. No way is that old man Zhuge Chengfeng anywhere in our vicinity. Your Highness, let's make our move now; a long night invites nightmares."

[T/N: 夜長夢多/a long night invites nightmares; meaning 'circumstances can become unfavourable over long periods of time'.]

The Third Prince contemplated for a moment and then said, "First of all, we mustn't rush. In any case, we already have them surrounded. Keep a close eye on them for now. We don't have to act rashly without thinking. Let them be anxious for a night. When they relax at daybreak, we'll make our move."

Yang Chong replied, "We don't have to take them so seriously like this; almost all of them are injured. Although that little witch is somewhat difficult to deal with, how can she possibly overpower Your Highness?"

The Third Prince indifferently said, "Yang Chong, you aren't experienced enough yet; you're still impulsive. How can I feel at ease letting you assume personal responsibility? Correct, they're already injured, but injured tigers can still fight back. Don't ever treat your enemy with contempt. Since one night's time is enough to crush their fighting spirit and weaken their strength, why wouldn't we take advantage of that? The way to overcome your enemies is by using a thousand methods and a hundred plans to create favourable conditions for yourself. You must learn this well."

[T/N: 千方百計/a thousand methods, a hundred plans; meaning 'by every possible means'.]

Yang Chong's forehead was already covered in sweat. He felt both veneration and fear towards His Highness the Third Prince. The faint domineering aura coming from the Third Prince caused him to feel heavily oppressed.

"Yes, subordinate knows his mistakes."

With his hands clasped behind his back, the Third Prince took a few steps in his tent. "Once we succeed, immediately return to Baiyue with Houyi Bow. You can't stop for even a minute on the way back. Do you understand?"

"Your Highness, are you not leaving?"

"I can't leave yet, I still need to go to the Luofeng Mountain Range to see the qilin." The Third Prince smiled.

Yang Chong said, "Your Highness, that is much too dangerous."

"It'd be even more dangerous if I were to immediately rush back to Baiyue. Everyone would realize that it was all my doing. Heihei, I'll remain here, leaving no evidence. No one can say I did it."

"Your Highness is brilliant."

"Alright, go make your arrangements with the troops. Tell them that when we make our move at dawn, it must be neat and tidy. Don't leave a single survivor." The Third Prince's face was icy.

"Yes, subordinate understands." Despite the fact that Yang Chong held innumerable life or death experiences under his belt, he still broke out into a cold shudder.

Princess Chu Yu gathered all her subordinates. Her face lacked its usual playfulness. At the moment, her expression was incomparably serene, like an unflustered general.

"I'll inform you all now regarding the matter involving that degenerate Chen Nan. 'An ordinary man is innocent; treasuring a jade ring becomes a crime'. The Third Prince of the Empire of Baiyue is as ambitious as a feral wolf. He plans to steal our Chu Empire's national treasure Houyi Bow. There's a huge discrepancy in strength between us. Even if I were to give Houyi Bow to them now, there's no way they'd be compassionate and lenient. They'll still kill us in order to silence us. But there's two ways for us to die. One way is to not fight and die humiliating deaths. The other is to die as heroes. You guys decide which way you want."

[T/N: 匹夫無罪, 懷璧其罪/an ordinary man is innocent; treasuring a jade ring becomes a crime; meaning 'a normal person hasn't committed a crime, but is accused of such due to hiding a treasured possession'.]

All the guards in the tent lowered their voices and snarled, "Die as heroes."

"Right! Even though we've been forced into dire straits, we definitely can't surrender. We need to fight to the death and make them pay the

bitterest price. Are you guys willing to use your blood to uphold the honour of our Empire of Chu?"

"Willing!"

"I want to fight for the princess!"

"I want to fight for the Empire of Chu until I bleed my last drop of blood!"

...

Chen Nan gasped with admiration at the princess's exceptional method. She obviously wanted to get everyone's support in helping her escape, yet she still gave such an impassioned speech.

"Alright, now we'll begin our preparations..."

The princess assigned a position for every imperial guard. After her explanation, they were to take advantage of the shade of night and covertly lie in wait at their respective positions.

After that, the princess turned to face Chen Nan and said, "Degenerate, considering your martial arts is so pathetic, I don't need you to kill them. You only need to take good care of Houyi Bow."

"..."

"Do you guys have anything to add?"

A female guard stood up and asked, "Princess, why don't we take advantage of the night and break out of the enclosure?"

The princess shook her head, sighing. "You guys come over here."

She lifted up a corner of the big tent, picked up a little stone off the ground to serve as a bullet, and fired it into the trees. The little stone made a gentle sound when it landed in some underbrush not too far away. At the same time, the sound of the light cry of bowstrings could be heard. Ten plumed arrows shot towards the location of the underbrush.

"So you see, they've already made preparations. They've long ago set up an ambush for us. Heihei, since it's like this, we'll wait here. We'll wait for them to fall into our own ambush."

All the imperial guards thought of the princess admiringly.

The princess also said, "I'm guessing if they don't mobilize their attack within a watch, then they're probably putting it off until dawn. You guys must by all means be careful. You absolutely cannot slack off. Alright, you guys go prepare."

[T/N: A watch is two hours.]

Chen Nan inwardly sighed, "I didn't expect the little demon to be so meticulous. It's a pity that she doesn't have an army to command. If the power she had was equally matched with that of the Third Prince's, then to whose hand the deer falls is really uncertain. This little girl is truly

formidable!"

[T/N: 鹿死誰手/to whose hand the deer falls; meaning 'who wins'.]

Just before everyone went off, a guard suddenly kneeled on the ground and vowed, "Subordinate will definitely spare no effort in helping the princess escape from here."

Upon seeing this, the other guards also kneeled down in succession.

"I pledge my life to protect the princess."

"I'll protect the princess until I bleed my last drop of blood."

...

Everyone present quietly vowed to use their lives to safeguard the princess.

Of course, there was one exception. It was the one who the princess viewed as a 'degenerate', 'a smelly thief', Chen Nan. He inwardly said, "What a joke. Protect this little demon? She already prepared her escape a while ago. What a repulsive girl, actually wanting me to carry Houyi Bow to my death. Ai, if Houyi Bow wasn't sealed, who'd be able to stop me?"

After those several guards withdrew from the tent, they promptly lied in ambush nearby.

Chen Nan just began heading over to the side of the tent when a swordswoman suddenly unsheathed her longsword and pushed it against his neck. She said, "You need to stay behind and protect the princess. Stay here diligently."

Chen Nan felt that compared to the character Dou E from the ancient legend, he suffered even more injustice. It was an unfathomable mystery how he got wound up in this mess in the middle of a danger zone.

[T/N: 爬娥/Dou E; a character from the ancient Chinese play 感天動地竇娥冤/The Injustice to Dou E written by Guan Hanqing; spoilers: she suffered a lot of unfair injustices.]

Death is not at all painful. It happens in an instant, nothing more. The most painful thing that nothing can surpass is waiting for death. Every minute was torture. With every passing moment, the heartstrings are pulled tight until they can no longer bear the continuous immense strain and snap, falling apart.

Despite the outstanding martial arts of the imperial guards under the command of the princess, the endless wait still caused them to break out into cold sweats. In contrast, the character who they viewed in their eyes as 'shady', Chen Nan, was quite relaxed. Chen Nan was continuously surveying escape routes. He relentlessly revised his plan to escape.

"En! Step one: I'll fling Houyi Bow at that poor devil. Step two: I should run to that place. Then... en! The umpteenth step: won't I meet my death at those trees? I need to think... en! At last, I'll take advantage of the chaos and slip away."

If the people helping became aware of what Chen Nan was thinking,

they'd surely kill him straight away.

Over the eastern horizon, only the planet Venus remained dazzling in the sky. Chen Nan knew that the moment of life or death would soon approach. He took the dark Houyi Bow out of its case and gently rubbed it. He used the language of ten thousand years ago and lowly said, "Old friend, do you remember me? I'm Chen Nan. Who could've imagined that I'd be able to meet you again after ten thousand years."

A guard beside him gave him a shove and said, "What are you muttering?"

"Oh, nothing."

Just then, twenty or so human figures assumed a ring-shaped encirclement around them. The guards under the princess's leadership let out long breaths. They had painfully waited for this moment to finally feel some bit of relief. Regardless of whether or not they survived, they were unwilling to endure this kind of torment.

When the endless night ended, murderous qi soared in the forest. Like tigers and wolves, those twenty or so people rushed forward. Meanwhile, the guards under the princess's leadership already had in their hands bows and arrows aimed at the intruders.

[T/N: 漫漫長夜/endless night; can also mean 'long suffering'.]

"Sou!"

"Sou!"

...

The plumed arrows simultaneously flew, resulting in wretched screams. Six people were shot to death on the spot, falling onto the ground.

The leader of the Third Prince's guards, Yang Chong, cursed in a low voice, "Fuck this devil princess! It's already daybreak, but she's still on guard."

When the ninth person was shot to death by a plumed arrow, the Third Prince's guards finally arrived in front of Chen Nan and company. Their bows and arrows lost their effectiveness.

One after another, the princess's guards wielded their weapons to meet them head on. Only two people didn't move from their original positions. One was Chen Nan. The other was one of the survivors who experienced the great battle with the Monolithic Snake: a magus-in-training. Presently, Chen Nan was still searching for an opportunity to escape while the magus-in-training was reading aloud an incantation, preparing to use his magic.

Magical elements fluctuated in the air. A massive Ice Awl rapidly coalesced. The Ice Awl transformed into a white light and forced its way into the group of enemies. In the blink of an eye, it impaled two people through the chest, finally stabbing a third person to death before disintegrating.

After launching such a successful attack, the magus-in-training was pleasantly surprised. When he wanted to once again make use of his

magic, he discovered that his body had exhausted its magical power. Originally, his body was seriously injured; the fact that he was capable of casting a single spell was already extraordinary. But now that he was unable to use his magic, he was a dead man. A steel sword was launched by an enemy towards him. It accurately pierced the magus-in-training's heart. The magus-in-training carried an unreconciled expression on his face as he slowly shut his eyes.

Chen Nan still didn't move. He lied on his stomach in the underbrush, waiting for the best opportunity to flee.

Currently, both sides fighting to the death suffered casualties. Despite their injuries, the princess's guards persistently propped themselves up. The whole group was using all their being to battle.

Suddenly, the princess rushed out of the tent as fast as lightning. She burst into the group of enemies with a slender sword in hand. Wherever it passed, someone would fall dead. They left behind a splattering of blood in the air.

Chen Nan stared blankly. He originally believed that the princess would take advantage of the chaos to escape. He didn't expect her to actually storm the enemy group instead. It seemed like she had a change of heart when the time came for the painful struggle. If not, she wouldn't have forcibly given Houyi Bow to him earlier.

"It's hard to imagine that the little demon hasn't evolved into a genuine demon yet. Ai! In the end, she's still just a young girl. Her heart can't be regarded as too frigid yet; she still can't bear to abandon her subordinates on their own while she flees for her life. If she was older by a few more years, maybe this would be a different case."

While the enemies were in a state of confusion, Chen Nan lifted up the dark Houyi Bow and stood up. In an instant, he became the focus of everyone present. Ten or so enemies with murderous qi rushed towards him at the same time.

Seeing Chen Nan successfully attract the enemy's attention, a look of unwillingness flashed across the princess's eyes, but then she became incomparably furious.

Chen Nan loudly shouted at the Third Prince's guards, "Brothers, I've accidentally become your enemy. Don't you guys want this Houyi Bow? Catch!" He tossed Houyi Bow towards them, but he deliberately angled it in a certain way. Houyi Bow landed beside the princess.

"Kill!" The Third Prince's guards flocked forward. With her safety in mind, the princess's guards also rushed forward. The encirclement immediately collapsed. Everyone clashed towards either the princess or Houyi Bow. Troops from both sides fought in frenzy.

The princess glared fiercely at Chen Nan. Her eyes were about to breathe fire. If her gaze was capable of killing, then Chen Nan would've been burnt to ashes long ago. Her extremely unreconciled gaze shifted from him to her charging enemies whom she welcomed with her blade.

Chen Nan coldly smiled. "Don't blame me. If others don't offend me, I won't offend others. It was you who forced me to carry Houyi Bow to my death at first. I'm only acting in my own best interests."

He bent over and picked up a longsword off the ground, equipping it.

He turned around and just began to run towards the depths of the forest when suddenly, the sound of a patter came forth. Houyi Bow literally dropped from the sky to his feet.

"No way! How can it come back to me so quickly!" Chen Nan turned his head and saw the princess coldly smiling among a group of enemies. Meanwhile, several of the Third Prince's guards were already charging towards him.

"Little girl, you sure are fierce." He already didn't have enough time to throw Houyi Bow back. He turned around and dashed towards the depths of the forest, but after running only a dozen or so steps, he suddenly stopped in his tracks, his body ice cold.

The Third Prince, leading four guards, emerged from the depths of the forest. He had on his face the trace of a faint smile and said, "Interesting, interesting; marvellous, marvellous. I didn't expect Princess Yu would lose because of a hole that you've dug. I truly underestimated you. I didn't think you'd be this quick-witted. At first, I was waiting for Her Highness Princess Yu here. Who would've known that you'd be the first to run away."

"This... Your Highness the Third Prince, I've never regarded you as an enemy. I didn't come out of the imperial palace with them, and I'm certainly no palace eunuch. That little demon – oh, that Princess Yu – she's the reason why I've become entangled in this mess. It's because I know a gargantuan secret that she's been wanting to keep my mouth shut all this time. But... in the end, it seems like her wishes won't be fulfilled."

"You call her a little demon? Haha... chap, you really are amusing," the Third Prince heartily laughed, but his face quickly became heavy. "In front

of me, you're nothing but a little crafty at best. Don't try to put on whatever act in front of me, and don't vainly try to use whatever 'gargantuan secret' to beg me to let you go."

Chen Nan's heart sunk and a cold layer of sweat covered his body. "It's true. I accidentally discovered a map in some ancient cave. Although I'm not particularly proficient in ancient civilizations, I still know a few words. The surface of it has the three ancient words 'Black Tortoise Shell'."

"What?" The Third Prince was alarmed, but in a moment, his face chilled. He coldly said, "You have guts, to have the impertinence to babble nonsense in front of me!"

"Your Highness, everything I've said is true. Absolutely true. If not, that little demon wouldn't chase me for a thousand li to kill me."

The Third Prince's eyes emanated a chilling glint. He coldly looked at Chen Nan for a moment before saying, "Where's the map?"

"This... it's already been hidden in a secret place."

"Hmph!" The Third Prince gave a cold hump and called out to him, "Grab Houyi Bow and come."

Seeing the Third Prince withdraw, several guards who were originally pursuing to kill Chen Nan for Houyi Bow also followed suit. At the moment, Houyi Bow was in the underbrush not too far away.

The Black Tortoise Shell immortal treasure which has never been

obtained by anyone before truly had an incredible attractiveness. Although the Third Prince didn't believe Chen Nan's words, he left him alive so that he'd be able to more thoroughly investigate him later.

"Hu~" Chen Nan let out a gasp of air. He handed Houyi Bow over to the Third Prince whose face stirred emotionally. He used his hands to continuously rub the bow's dark back.

"At last, the continent's immortal treasure Houyi Bow is in my hands. Haha..." His two eyes emitted a blazing light.

Now, the daylight was already bright. A layer of faint mist hovered in the forest. The prickling smell of blood saturated the air. Corpses were disorderedly littered throughout the depths of the forest.

The princess's white clothes were already cut open at various locations. There were more than ten splatters of blood on her body. Her eyes contained a baleful look. Blades were pushed up against her. Over half of the Third Prince's guards were killed by her, but nearly all of her guards were exterminated. Only a few lying on the ground sporadically let out weak groans.

"Stop!" The Third Prince said loudly, "Your Highness Princess Yu is indeed outstanding. The guards under my command are experts; one can be considered as ten. It's unexpected that this many still died."

The leader of the guards, Yang Chong, and three other attackers backed away from the princess.

The princess propped herself up against her sword, panting for air. Locks of her long jet-black hair were drenched in sweat. Her spirit was weary, strength exhausted, but the violent deaths of the guards under her leadership deeply stung her heart. She had relied on her fury to support herself until now.

The princess glowered at the Third Prince and directly called him by his name, "Ren Jian, by doing this, aren't you afraid of inciting a war between Chu Empire and Baiyue Empire?"

"Heihei, Princess Yu, you should already understand. What conspired today will forever be an odd occurrence. No one will know what kind of incident had happened here to the princess of the Empire of Chu."

"There isn't a wall that can thoroughly stop the news. Sooner or later, this matter will become well-known throughout the continent."

"There is no wall here, and no one to hear the news."

The princess pointed at Chen Nan and said, "What about him?"

"Haha, thinking about this really makes me laugh. The princess of the grand Empire of Chu, the brilliant, famous little witch, was unexpectedly made a fool by this insignificant character."

The princess turned her fierce gaze to Chen Nan. If she could still move, she would have stabbed him to death long ago. Chen Nan was inwardly angered. At this time, the little demon was still trying to frame him.

The Third Prince shot a cold glace at Chen Nan before turning back to the princess and saying, "Princess Yu, pray tell, how should I handle you? I really can't bear to kill a beautiful woman as attractive as you, but if I were to leave you at my side, I'd have to constantly be on guard for your assassination attempts. Ai, this is really a big headache. It seems like the only thing I can do is quietly send you away. I think there are some princes of other countries who would definitely want to receive you as a gift."

The princess seemed like she was hard at thought, her face full of pain.

The Third Prince coldly said, "You mustn't make a vain attempt at exploiting those princes' powers to get revenge. Maybe some of them will be kind-hearted enough to let you go. You can be a special favour that we give away. Merely a present that an alliance of others and I can pass around among each other. Heihei, I know you won't commit suicide. You won't give up an opportunity to live; only if you continue living can you try to get revenge."

Powerless, the princess sat on the ground.

The heart of the nearby Chen Nan became desolate. The Third Prince was truly too terrible. This was absolutely an ambitious and ruthless character.

Suddenly, the princess lifted up her head. She firmly looked at Chen Nan, then faced the Third Prince and asked, "Ren Jian, why won't you kill him?"

The Third Prince smiled. "Oh, I forgot to tell you. This guy will give me

the hidden precious map pertaining to the location of the Black Tortoise Shell." Although he didn't particularly believe Chen Nan knew the secret of the Black Tortoise Shell, he felt that the resentment between Chen Nan and the princess was due to this hidden precious map. He wanted to take this opportunity to inflict another blow upon the princess.

"Haha..." The princess suddenly gave out a large, graceless laugh. She was even crying.

"Ren Jian, you huge idiot. Haha... it's so funny I'd die. You actually believe that guy has the Black Tortoise Shell? That's too funny! Haha~!"

The Third Prince Ren Jian's face became ashen. He coldly looked at Chen Nan.

Chen Nan's heart instantly became heavy. He suddenly brandished a palm and struck at the pit of the stomach of the guard standing beside him. He easily wrestled Houyi Bow out of that guard's grasp. Learning from the princess's teacher Zhuge Chengfeng, Chen Nan used Houyi Bow as a club. With strength, he faced another guard to the side. His actions were simply too abrupt, and that guard still didn't fully comprehend the current situation. His chest was bashed in and he instantly died a violent death.

"Haha, amusing. Degenerate, nice going!" The princess shouted, finding joy in someone else's misfortune.

"Kill him for me!" Ren Jian bellowed.

Two other guards wielding steel swords chopped towards Chen Nan. He was left with no option but to raise Houyi Bow to meet the blows. Even though he used Houyi Bow to deflect the guards' attacks in the beginning, he couldn't defend against twenty or so exchanges. He was eventually forced onto his back by a guard's palm strike. He spat out a mouthful of blood onto the ground.

When his blood sprinkled over Houyi Bow, a warm current surged from the bow to his hands. The dark Houyi Bow began to emit a faint golden glow. The bowstring lightly vibrated.

"This... wasn't Houyi Bow like this ten thousand years ago? Whenever I gripped it, it would be lively and gently cry, releasing a golden glow. Has the... has the seal been removed?"

As all this was happening in an instant, a guard was charging towards Chen Nan who was lying on the ground.

Chen Nan quickly climbed up off the ground and nocked a dried stick into the bowstring. He pulled the bowstring back a little bit. A golden radiance, like a haze, surged towards the stick. A faint golden ray shot forth from the bowstring like lightning. A squall erupted in the forest as the wind thundered.

The golden ray ran into the steel sword, colliding with it in a shower of golden rain. The steel sword was shattered in an instant, its fragments sprinkling down in the air. The stick in the midst of the golden rain was like the God of Death's lance. It instantly split the guard's chest open. Blood gushed out wildly from the massive bloody hole. The guard died without even closing his eyes.

## Volume 1 Chapter 7: Taking Liberties with the Princess

This astonishing new development caused everyone present to turn pale in fright. The princess was left wide eyed as she muttered, "How can this be? Didn't old fogey say that Houyi Bow could only be used once a year? I already used it once, even old fogey couldn't pull it apart again, but this degenerate actually..."

An intense uneasiness surged in the Third Prince's heart. He never expected that this lowly prisoner would be able to break the seal placed on Houyi Bow.

Chen Nan fired off another arrow. With another thundering of the wind, a sparkling golden ray shot forth from Chen Nan towards another guard. The guard looked utterly startled as the shining arrow gouged a sizable, bloody hole into his stomach. Blood bubbled out. A bloody mist diffused from the corpse.

Again, Chen Nan nocked a dried stick into the bowstring. Everyone on the battlefield had discoloured expressions. No one knew whose life would be seized by the next arrow. The originally insignificant character had transformed into the beholder of everyone's fates.

Chen Nan nearly collapsed from exhaustion with those two arrows. Although those two arrows had removed the immediate dangers adjacent to him, the crisis in front of him was still left unresolved. He barely had enough power to fire another arrow, let alone the other six enemies on the battlefield. Which one should he shoot?

Whenever the stick was aimed at someone else, everyone present

turned more and more fearful. In their eyes, the tiny, dried stick was as heavy as Taishan.

[T/N: 泰山/Tàishān; Mount Tai in Shandong, one of the Five Sacred Mountains in China.]

Chen Nan finally aimed the stick in the direction of the Third Prince Ren Jian. Ren Jian's face changed slightly, but he quickly calmed down.

"Chen Nan, think clearly. The one you want to kill is a prince. If you kill me, it'll be equivalent to offending the entire Empire of Baiyue. Can you by yourself fight against a whole nation? Although the world is large, I'm afraid you won't be able to find a place to call your own afterwards." The Third Prince's tone relaxed as he said, "If you agree to surrender and pay allegiance to me, I won't only forget about the disrespect you've showed me today, but I'll also guarantee that you'll rapidly move up in the world; I'll give you a high official post with a generous salary."

"Do you think I'm a three year old? If I let you go today, forget about a high post and a generous salary, my corpse might not even be left intact. What I loathe most is others threatening me. Today, I will kill you, you cheap prince."

The princess laughed, "Haha, Ren Jian is 'cheap'."

Chen Nan inhaled a deep gulp of air. He exhausted all the remaining energy in his body to fire one more arrow. The faint golden ray seemed to be a divine punishment from the heavens. With the rumbling of thunder, it swiftly shot towards Ren Jian.

The Third Prince Ren Jian's face abruptly changed. He dragged a nearby

guard and threw him in front of the arrow's trajectory. The guard's blood sprayed everywhere. The guard had an unreconciled expression as he toppled over into a pool of his own blood. After the golden ray pierced through the guard's chest, although its colour darkened quite a bit, its velocity didn't diminish at all as it continued to fly towards the Third Prince.

A resplendent radiance flashed from the Third Prince's waist. A one chi long dagger with dazzling radiance collided with the golden ray.

"A flying sword! Don't tell me he's a xiudaoist?!" Chen Nan cried out, alarmed.

Every successful xiudaoist has several magical weapons that they bind to their lives, most of which are flying swords. Not only can xiudaoists telepathically send our their flying swords to kill someone from over a thousand steps away, but at the very peak of their swordplay, they can also attain total control of their sword, riding upon it to escape the ground. But there weren't many successful xiudaoists. Akin to phoenix feathers and unicorn horns, there were even fewer who reached such a high level in their swordplay.

When Chen Nan was young, he took an exceptional liking towards cultivating Dao. But the profound words of his father Chen Zhan had dispelled his feelings on the matter. Chen Zhan had said, "Cultivating martial arts is not necessarily inferior to cultivating Dao. If you enter the level of Zhenwu and comprehend the true essence of the martial way, then you'll realize that cultivation has many different routes leading to the same direction. The pinnacle of the martial way and the pinnacle of Dao coincide a little..."

Although Chen Zhan hadn't finished speaking, Chen Nan had already understood his meaning. Henceforth, he cultivated diligently. In the end, when he was sixteen years old, he became known as 'the best' among his peers. But then what? His cultivation had declined instead of improving and he had descended into the nadir of his life.

Thinking back to the present, Chen Nan realized that the Third Prince was indeed a xiudaoist, but he only recently started cultivating. It is said that the flying swords of successful xiudaoists are rarely on their persons. Instead, they're often concealed and absorbed into their bodies.

The magnificently resplendent sword collided with the golden ray. The sound of metal striking metal roared through the air. The dagger's splendour was completely repelled back, and it shattered into innumerable fragments, falling onto the ground. A jolt shot through the Third Prince's body. He repeatedly vomited mouthfuls of blood, his complexion deathly pale.

Chen Nan understood that flying swords were closely bound to their xiudaoist. If a flying sword were to suffer damage, their xiudaoist would also suffer severe injuries, if not outright killed.

Although the golden arrow had darkened substantially, it still continued on its trajectory towards the Third Prince. Currently, there were two men standing protectively in front of the Third Prince. Yang Chong, the commander of the guards, had sealed their acupoints and had thrown them in front of the Third Prince.

Yang Chong loudly shouted, "Your Highness, I heard my teacher once say that arrows shot by the Godly Bow will not stop until it comes into contact with the blood of its target. Your Highness, please excuse me."

The instant the golden arrow pierced through the two guards, Yang Chong arrived at the Third Prince's side. He wrapped his arms around the seriously injured Third Prince and lifted him up into the air. Meanwhile, the stick, which only had a faint golden glow remaining, failed to penetrate into Ren Jian's body. The arrow disintegrated upon hitting him.

"Ah~!" the Third Prince Ren Jian miserably shrieked. Then, he indignantly cursed, "Yang Chong you idiot, I've already thrown up so much blood that my clothes are already dripping with it. You... if you cause even a single rip, you..."

The Third Prince angrily threw up another mouthful of blood, scaring Yang Chong into a cold sweat.

The princess burst into laughter, "Haha... so hilarious. The cheap prince's ass is about to burst open, haha..."

Chen Nan already completely exhausted the energy in his body. Without the strength to shoot a fourth arrow, his confidence plummeted. He fiercely inhaled a mouthful of air and, with great difficulty, put together one last tiny bit of strength. He stood up and walked forward a few steps, putting on an act like he was about to collect another dried stick.

Seeing this, the Third Prince, Yang Chong, and the princess stirred. Yang Chong piggybacked the Third Prince Ren Jian and fled. Currently, his qinggong was of the grandmaster level. In a flash, he disappeared into the forest.

The princess had exhausted her stamina from her fierce fighting. Now, her waist ached and her legs were soft. When she tried to get up to run a few steps in pursuit, she wound up taking a tumble. Watching the Third Prince and Yang Chang successfully escape frustrated her to the point of tears.

Chen Nan didn't think that his feint would achieve such a great result. The Third Prince of Baiyue and his stray dog had anxiously fled. The little demonic princess of Chu was so scared she blessed the pear blossoms with rain. It was lovely and pitiful. He didn't dare to be so pleased as to lose his own sense of measure. He nocked a dry stick into his bowstring and strenuously aimed Houyi Bow at the princess as we walked towards her. He wanted the princess to see what he had previously gone through when his acupoint was sealed.

[T/N: 梨花帶雨/blessed the pear blossoms with rain, meaning something like 'crying daintily'.]

Seeing Chen Nan take step after step towards her, the princess's face lost its flowery countenance. The tears in her eyes danced. She hadn't forgotten how she had treated Chen Nan before.

"Degenerate... smelly thief... you... don't come over."

Chen Nan nearly let out a laugh. Chen Nan didn't think the little demonic princess had the ability to display such a weak, feeble look. But soon after, he inwardly muttered, "When she was confronting the Third Prince Ren Jian, she didn't look this afraid. Don't tell me that I'm more terrifying than him? En! That's wrong!"

"Little demon, take out what you have hidden under your sleeves. If you

don't, I'll shoot."

"Dang!"

The princess helplessly threw away the dagger concealed up her sleeves onto the ground.

"Hmph, how can your eyes be so malicious."

Chen Nan expended a great deal of effort in walking to the princess. With the dried stick, he hit a few points on her body, sealing eight or nine major acupoints.

"Haha, success." Pleased with himself, Chen Nan heartily laughed. With both his legs weak, he fell onto the ground.

"Ah... degenerate, smelly thief, fuck off... hurry and fuck off..." the princess fearfully cried, over and over.

Chen Nan lied across the princess's thighs and exhaled, saying, "I'm so tired, I'll die, ai! Little demon, do you still have the qualifications to order me around right now?"

"You're shameless... obscene... hurry and fuck off degenerate, smelly thief..."

"So noisy. If you keep clamouring, I can't stop what will happen next." Chen Nan aimed towards the princess's towering chest.

"Ah... degenerate... smelly thief... bastard..." the princess cried out in fear, but the sound gradually decreased in volume. At the moment, she was scared out of her wits. She was truly afraid of Chen Nan's evil desires.

Chen Nan couldn't endure his exhaustion a moment longer. With the princess's thighs as his pillow, he rested and taunted her. "So comfortable. The royal princess's legs are really out of the ordinary. Meditation, cultivation, can't your legs also help with treating high blood pressure? Wo, this is ironic."

The princess was ashamed and angry. Her eyes were gleaming with tears.

"Degenerate... release me. If you let me go, I'll tell my father the emperor to make you a high official."

"I'm quite lazy; I don't want to be an official. Besides, I don't believe you. Just now, the Third Prince wanted to use crafty plots and deceitful stratagems against me, so I shot him in the ass. Do you want to be shot as well?" Chen Nan stretched out his arm and with a bang, he slapped the princess's charming bottom. Previously, she had trampled all over him. To vent his anger, he was making her ashamed and angry.

"Ah... you..." The princess was incomparably ashamed and indignant. Her tears streamed down her face.

"Smelly thief, if... you... let me go, I'll... be good to my word, I'll... definitely give you... many rewards," the princess choked with sobs.

"Ai, to date, you either call me a degenerate or a smelly thief. I really can't tell if you're begging me for something or trying to anger me."

"Chen Nan... Young Master Chen, let me go... wuwu..." Feeling wronged, the princess burst into tears. She was the Emperor of Chu's most doted upon little daughter. When had she ever yielded to someone and spoken to them with such a low voice? The more she cried, the more upset she became. The more she cried, the more wronged she felt. Her tears were like a broken line of pearls that, once broken, couldn't be put back together.

"Don't cry, don't cry."

"Wuwu..." The princess ignored him. Her crying became even louder.

"If you keep crying, I'll immediately strip off your clothes," Chen Nan said as he firmly grasped the princess's sleeves.

The princess was so scared that she immediately stopped weeping. Sparkling teardrops clung to her long eyelashes. Her face was covered in tear stains. Her appearance was incredibly lovely and pitiful, like a delicate little angel.

Chen Nan inwardly sighed, "She's still just a little girl after all." He gently said, "Ai, stop crying." But he inadvertently saw a sudden flash of happiness in the princess's eyes. He came to a sudden realization and gave the princess's thighs a big slap, and said, "You almost deceived me."

"Ah~! You..." With her thighs receiving punishment, the princess gave out a fearful cry. She didn't think that Chen Nan would change like this so quickly.

"Little demon, you don't have to keep pretending; how can demons become angels? Throughout the whole journey, your demonic nature was apparent. Recalling your conduct and deeds, it was like I was living a nightmare. I won't forget the things you did. It's already too late to pretend to be pitiful now, you already let me see your true nature."

"Young Master Chen... you've misunderstood me. Actually, I'm very kind-hearted and honest, not one bit vicious. Last time... last time who told you to peep at me while I was bathing? I'm a princess; it's only natural that I have the dignity and honour of one. I had no alternative but to treat you that way."

Chen Nan said, "You're kind-hearted and honest and not vicious? How kind-hearted of you to almost castrate me. Also, every time you were overly happy, you'd find me and make me 'convey' the 'happiness' in my heart. I usually couldn't even get up off the ground after, and you call this having no alternative?"

The princess pitifully said, "Young Master Chen... Chen-dage... I was wrong, please forgive me... Let me go, wuwu..."

"Little demon, don't keep pretending. To tell you the truth, ever since I grabbed you that time, I've never planned on letting you go."

"Chen Nan-dage, let me go. Whatever you want, I'll make my father the emperor give to you. You can be rewarded with a lot of gold, silver, and

jewels, or even many gorgeous women." With that said, the princess looked at him hopefully.

"Gold, silver, and jewels are mere worldly possessions, what will I do with them? As for beautiful women, is there a need for me to get another one from so far away? Heihei..." Deciding that the princess was still putting on an act, Chen Nan gave her a smile filled with malicious intent.

"You... I'm begging you, let me go."

"Give up, I definitely won't release you."

The princess lowered herself so much and spoke so well of him. Seeing Chen Nan so resolute, her expression turned cold. Her tone abruptly changed as she screamed, "Audacious! Do you know who you're talking to? I am the Empire of Chu's princess. You're nothing but a mere commoner of my Chu Empire. Treating me like this, aren't you afraid of provoking the wrong people and getting yourself killed? Aren't you afraid that my royal father will execute you and nine generations of your family?"

The princess was furious. Just now, she had seemed so delicate.

"If I were afraid, I wouldn't be doing this. Little demon, are you finally revealing your true colours?"

With an icy expression, she coldly said, "Chen Nan, you better hope for the best. Everywhere beneath the sky is royal territory. All the land including the seas belongs to the imperial family. Today, you've already

committed an offense against the Third Prince. If you continue to disrespect me, then that's tantamount to offending two nations. There won't be a single place in the world that you can call your home."

She took a glance at Chen Nan and continued, "Don't think that your actions aren't known by gods and aren't felt by ghosts, the Third Prince Ren Jian already escaped. If I don't return to the imperial palace safely, Ren Jian will definitely expose you. At that time, he'll do everything he can to pin all the blame onto your shoulders. At that time you'll... heihei."

"If I let you go back, I'd still find it hard to avoid death. Ai, it seems like my best option is to find a place with verdant hills and limpid water and live a life in seclusion. But I have a royal princess with me; although it's difficult, I can accept it. In the future, we can have a bunch of kids. Now that I think about it, this kind of life doesn't sound too bad." Chen Nan deliberately showed a longing expression on his face.

After hearing this, the princess's face paled beyond comparison. Her voice trembled as she said, "You're shameless, vulgar, despicable..."

Chen Nan calmly let her finish her cursing and continued, "After ten or eight years, we can bring a huge group of kids to go see your father. I think at that time, he won't wish to kill me anymore."

The princess was so angry that she was quickly becoming wild. She cursed, "You're a devil."

"Haha, I'm a devil, you're a little demon; we're a couple who were made for each other. Indeed, fate worked over a great distance to bring us together!" Chen Nan took the princess's right hand in his, fiddling with

her slim, jade finger.

"You... let go of me." The princess, her face deep red as she blushed, was ashamed and angry.

"Even demons have times when they're embarrassed. It's a true marvel. I remember at that time you were going to castrate me with your own hands. Now, you've suddenly become such an embarrassed and bashful young lady."

"You... hmpf! It's like a cockroach crawled onto my hand; it makes me sick." After having said that, the princess shut her eyes and ignored him.

Chen Nan smiled. "Alright, since it's like this, I'll be like a cockroach and sleep with you in my embrace."

With that, he sat up, embraced the princess into his arms, and reclined on the ground.

"Ah~! Let go. Take your filthy hands off me. Ah... you hoodlum, scoundrel..." The princess was beyond ashamed and angered. She very fiercely gazed at Chen Nan, gnashing her teeth in fury. She was itching to take a bite at Chen Nan.

Chen Nan held the warm and soft body of the princess against him. Seeing her jade-like complexion, he felt his heartbeat somewhat speed up. He couldn't deny that the princess had an appearance capable of destroying a nation. He had used Houyi Bow three times consecutively, exhausting the stores of energy in his body. Because of that and his

previous sleepless night, drowsiness began to sweep through him. With the intoxicating smell of the princess's delicate fragrance, he felt his body was as light as a feather. He slowly fell asleep.

From the beginning, the princess had cursed nonstop at Chen Nan. After seeing Chen Nan unexpectedly fall asleep with her in his embrace, she hurriedly stopped her cursing. After all, a sleeping enemy is much safer than a sober enemy. The princess didn't know the own feelings in her heart; never before had she lied down in a man's embrace before, let alone an unfamiliar one. Usually, she was the one giving others a hard time. Today, an average-looking degenerate would unexpectedly be so disrespectful to her. She constantly pondered countermeasures, from gentle persuasion to violent means, to deal with the current situation. She even thought of trying to seduce him, but she discarded every plan. The guy in front of her was unmoved by force or persuasion.

While she was reflecting on countermeasures, she also concentrated the remaining vital qi in her body to attack her sealed acupoints, but every attack failed to release her acupoints the slightest, until she finally gave up, discouraged.

Seeing Chen Nan sleeping so soundly, the princess felt very annoyed. Chen Nan's arms were wrapped around her soft, slender waist, making her breasts snug against his chest. This intimate contact made the princess go mad. Sensing Chen Nan's body temperature, the princess cursed over and over, "Wind, please rise up with force and blow down a tree to squish him; rain, thunder, please burn him to a crisp; darkness, stars, please send a meteor to crush him..."

But the wind didn't rise, the rain didn't fall, and the sky didn't darken. The trace of a smile formed at the corner of Chen Nan's mouth repeatedly as he had good dreams.

"This damned guy, how can he still smile so wantonly in his sleep? Degenerate, smelly thief, shameless loser..." Another round of cursing came from the princess's mouth. Gradually, she could no longer endure. She, too, had had a sleepless night. Not only that, but she had fiercely battled hand-to-hand earlier. She was just as tired as Chen Nan. Slowly, she also shut her eyes. Lying on Chen Nan's stomach, she fell asleep as well.

At noon, Chen Nan woke up from his dreams. A thread of sunshine shone through a small crack in the trees. The light shone on his body, giving him a sense of warmth and comfort, free from worries.

At this time, the princess was still in a deep slumber. Her chin fit snugly against Chen Nan's shoulder. It pressed down against him, giving him somewhat of an ache, but he didn't move. He silently admired the princess's peaceful sleeping posture. Suddenly, the princess mumbled to herself, "Degenerate, smelly thief... don't run... I need to kill you..."

Chen Nan muttered, "Even in your dreams you want to kill me. You really are too vicious."

Not too long later, the princess's long eyelashes fluttered as she blinked. She awoke, but was still drowsy-eyed and a little dazed.

Chen Nan said, "Little demon, your sleeping is very sound!"

The princess blinked her two eyes and thoroughly woke up. As the two of them were in such an intimate position, she became incomparably embarrassed, but her appearance quickly cooled.

"Seeing this princess in this condition, you better not talk about it."

"Why can't I talk about it? You drooled a ton while you were sleeping on my stomach! You almost drowned me."

"Drivel. That's just dew," the princess embarrassingly quibbled. Her face was red.

"Haha, your sincere appearance is really too cute. If you kept your demonic nature hidden and was always like this, everyone would treat you as an irreplaceable treasure."

The princess angrily rebuked, "Degenerate, smelly thief, don't appraise the head and discuss the feet when this princess is like this."

"Become my wife right away, can't a husband nitpick at his wife? Also, you don't always have to refer to yourself as 'this princess'. I'll also stop calling you a little demon. I'll just call you Yu'er."

"Outrageous! You're disgusting. Is 'Yu'er' something ordinary people can call me?" reproved the princess.

"Why can you call me outrageous then?" With that said, Chen Nan got up off the ground, carrying the princess with him.

"Outrageous! Degenerate, smelly thief, let me down..."

Chen Nan carried the princess on his shoulders. Picking up Houyi Bow, he took great strides away towards the exit of the forest.

The weather was exceptionally blistering hot. Noon's scorching sunshine made the princess, being carried on the shoulders of Chen Nan, feel incredibly uncomfortable. She angrily said, "You lunatic, where are you bringing me? Hurry and let me down."

"I'm looking for a place with verdant hills and limpid water to live a life in seclusion. Once I find it, we can kneel to heaven and earth as a bride and groom and get married," Chen Nan said, smiling.

"Ah... you're shameless. Hurry and let me down, it's so hot I'm going to die."

Just then, a wild animal came running out of the depths of the mountainous forest, panic-stricken. All sorts of little animals that were usually hidden came running as well, escaping into the distance. Various large carnivores were following closely behind them, also fearful. The running animals carried with them a fishy-smelling wind.

Chen Nan hastily let the princess off his shoulders, embraced her, and jumped up into a tree. Her eyes didn't show a trace of fear. Instead, her two eyes looked curiously at the various animals running all over the place. The earth suddenly trembled. The forest began to sway back and forth. From the distance, a tall figure was moving towards them.

"My god! What a big prize! We've unexpectedly come across an ancient giant. Weren't the chances of seeing such a big guy in this mountain range stupidly low?" Chen Nan's head began to ache.

The princess was just as endlessly excited, seemingly forgetting about her loss of her body's freedom.

"Wa! An ancient giant, ye! Not only have I seen a flying dragon, but I've also seen an ancient giant! This has been a worthwhile trip."

"Of course you'd think it's been a worthwhile trip; the most important part is you've found a good husband." One sentence from Chen Nan smacked the princess back to reality.

"You degenerate, don't talk, no one will think you're a mute," the princess angrily said.

Chen Nan said, "Don't talk, we'll hide here and wait for him to pass us." He saw the princess's crafty eyes and faintly said, "If you want to alert that big guy, don't hesitate, just do it. But the first thing I'll do is throw you at his feet."

"Why don't you simply seal my mute acupoint?"

"So you'll slowly learn to be obedient."

"You're dreaming. Wretched guy!" the princess indignantly cursed.

"Hong!", "Hong!", "Hong!"...

Step by step, the ancient giant drew closer and closer. With every step,

the mountainous forest swayed. The violent shaking caused the leaves of trees to be sent flying.

Chen Nan reached out and hugged the princess sitting on a different branch closer. He placed one of his hands closely behind her lower back. He lowly said, "He's about to come over. If you want to cry out, then be prepared. I'm already set to throw you over there."

The princess angrily said, "Take your filthy hands off, or else I'll really shout. Don't think I don't dare."

"I want to hug you close. It'd be a wonder if you somehow don't fall down. If you do, would you break your ass into pieces like the Third Prince?"

"You..."

The lofty ancient giant arrived only ten or so meters away from them. The giant was over thirty meters tall. The hair on his body was as thick and long as a beast's. Other than its exceptional height and thick body hair, its appearance was the same as a regular human.

A strong, rancid smell came from the giant, nearly causing Chen Nan and the princess to vomit. Chen Nan hastily buried his face in his sleeve, covering his mouth and nose. Seeing the princess's suffering and hopeful face, he removed the hand at her waist. He wrapped his arm around her neck, covering her mouth and nose with his hand.

At first, the giant walked in a straight line vacantly, but when he passed

the location of the two of them, his nostrils suddenly flared. He turned and walked straight towards the area of the mountainous forest they were in.

“Sure enough, he found us.” Chen Nan hugged the little witch and jumped down from the tree. He swiftly pushed his way deeper into the forest.

“Hou!”

The giant’s roar was like a sudden clap of thunder surging through the sky. He took massive strides and in only three steps, he overtook them.

“Honglonglong!”

Trees, six or seven meters in height, were like rice straws as they were trampled by the giant. A large tree collapsed in front of the two of them, inciting the princess to cry out in fear, “Degenerate, you’re a dumbass! Hurry the hell up, he’s closing in on us! Ah~! Hurry up a bit you moron~!”

## Volume 1 Chapter 8: Falling from Heaven to Hell

Chen Nan dangerously dodged the large toppled tree. He whirled around and dodged to the side. The giant didn't halt its steps; it continued taking large strides onward. While the giant was in the process of turning around, Chen Nan, carrying the princess, already ran twenty or so meters away.

The princess shouted, "So dumb! Hurry and run up ahead so we can hide. Ai! Idiot, why are you stopping? Hurry and run."

Chen Nan abruptly stopped and stood still. All of the sudden, he threw the princess to the ground.

"Ah~!" The princess's charming butt immediately came into close contact with the ground. "Degenerate, you... ow! That really hurt... you big bastard, ow..."

Chen Nan didn't pay any attention to her. He reached out and removed Houyi Bow from his shoulder. He bent his left foot a step forward. With his right hand, he nocked a dry stick into the bowstring. At this moment, Chen Nan seemed to have had devoted his entire mind on the giant before his eyes.

His right hand strained to pull the bowstring. The dark black Houyi Bow suffused with a faint gold. The strength of heaven and earth frantically surged into Houyi Bow. Chen Nan and Houyi Bow seemed to be of the same flesh and blood, bound together. A golden light emanated from him and Houyi Bow. A tremendous power undulated from his heart and diffused out in all directions.

The giant sensed the tremendous power fluctuating in the air and displayed a hint of fear. He stopped in his tracks.

A boundless, limitless strength borrowed from heaven and earth turbulently surged towards Chen Nan and Houyi Bow in waves. From head to toe, Chen Nan emitted a dazzling golden light. The blinding light even eclipsed the splendour of the celestial sun.

The giant involuntarily drew back a step. He was deeply frightened.

The princess's heart shook. In no way was she able to relate the man in front of him with that degenerate Chen Nan; the two of them were as different as the sky and the earth. The man before her eyes right now was like the peak of a mountain. His formidable, imposing manner was similar to that of gods and demons. It was enough to give someone the urge to prostrate themselves in front of him and worship him. Under this compelling, imposing manner, the ancient giant no longer seemed so grand. The man standing still up ahead resembled a giant who could raise his head to heaven and could bow his head to the earth.

[T/N: 俯仰天地/raise head to heaven, bow head to the earth; meaning something like 'without anything to be ashamed of whatsoever'.]

"Is this really that degenerate Chen Nan? Is this really that smelly thief?"

Between the sky and the ground, the winds rose, clouds surged, and blackness thundered. The light surrounding Houyi Bow grew denser and denser. The golden light rushed like running water towards the branch nocked to the bowstring. In this brief amount of time, the branch transformed into a bright golden ray. It emanated a fearsome force

capable of making one's heart palpitate in fear.

With the golden ray directed towards him, the giant trembled. Chen Nan softly released the bowstring, but at the final juncture, he angled Houyi Bow to the side and shot it in another direction. A fierce gale erupted. Black thunder surged on. Like lightning, the golden ray shot through the vacant space beside the giant. In the blink of an eye, it reached the forest's tallest, grandest tree.

The thirty or so meter tall tree disintegrated instantly. Wood shavings filled the sky. The ancient giant let out an uncanny scream, turned, and fled. The forest was thoroughly trampled to the ground by its massive steps. The mountainous forest trembled.

The ancient giant's lofty silhouette finally faded into the distance. The frantically surging strength from heaven and earth slowly died down until it was still again. In a short while, the mountainous forest regained its peacefulness. The golden light surrounding Chen Nan's body also gradually dimmed, before finally vanishing. But his formidable, imposing manner was still the same as before. His figure gave off the sense of a lofty mountain.

The princess's voice trembled. "Degenerate... Chen Nan... how can your shooting technique be so lacking? There was such a giant target in front of you, but you still couldn't hit it."

Chen Nan's imposing manner gradually became restrained. It seemed like his whole body underwent another transformation. He resumed his ordinary appearance. The princess let out a breath of air. She was truly somewhat afraid of the Chen Nan that had just been in front of her. He had seemed comparable to gods and demons.

Chen Nan sighed out a breath of air and said, "I don't know if I'll still have the chance to have another taste of the feeling of Zhenwu in this lifetime."

"Don't shamelessly show off. Even my teacher is only lingering at the fringe of the legendary Zhenwu, forget about you. Hmph, you're really labouring under a delusion!" The princess didn't give up the chance to attack Chen Nan's wishful thinking.

Chen Nan glanced at the grand tree's powdery fragments wafting boundlessly through the sky. He seemed to be speaking to himself, but also seemed to be speaking to the princess. "I used my heart to shoot that arrow! Just then, my heart already clambered up to the level of Zhenwu. If I had enough power then, I could've shot dead a heavenly god!"

"Pei! You're truly shameless. You couldn't even shoot the giant, a huge target, yet you still want to shoot a heavenly god. Who do you think you are!"

Presently, Chen Nan completely resumed his original appearance. He smiled. "I'm your husband."

"Hmph, shameless!"

Chen Nan paid no attention to her and continued, "After a godly arrow has been shot, it won't stop until it comes into contact with the target's blood. Do you honestly think that arrow missed its target? I just didn't seize the opportunity to kill him in one move. If by chance it was like that

time you somehow messed up when dealing with the Monolithic Snake, wouldn't it end up causing a fatal disaster? Therefore, I only used the power of a godly arrow to deter him. If I had used enough strength and drew the bowstring back just a hair more, it would've shot towards him without hesitation."

"I just realized something. Degenerate, not only are you super shameless, but you're also a super disgusting, narcissistic madman!" Although the princess's mouth was mercilessly insulting Chen Nan, recalling the scene that she had just witnessed, she couldn't help but become despondent. The might of that arrow just now had left an incredibly deep impression on her. Her heart couldn't help but acknowledge that at that moment, Chen Nan's heart and mind were fully in tune with Houyi Bow.

The princess felt aggrieved and inwardly said, "I can't believe this mediocre guy could actually get the Godly Bow's approval. Repulsive!"

"Wife, let's go. Let's go home and have our wedding ceremony!" Chen Nan embraced the princess.

"Damn degenerate, let me down, hurry and let me down..." the princess incessantly cursed at him.

Just when Chen Nan carried her on his shoulders, the princess seized the opportunity to open her mouth and bite down on Chen Nan's shoulder ferociously.

"Ah~!" Chen Nan painfully cried, "Ah, you little demon, don't bite..."

He reached out a hand and pinched the princess's chin. He expended quite a bit of energy to pry open her mouth.

"Putong!"

Chen Nan once again threw the princess onto the ground. For the second time, the princess's butt came into close contact with the ground. The pain caused her face to turn pale.

"Ah~! You bastard, ow!... It hurts so damn much... damn degenerate... ow..."

Chen Nan undid his upper outer garment and pressed it against the orderly row of teeth marks on his shoulder. His face was purple.

"Little demon, you're still so fierce!"

In pain, the princess's eyes were gleaming with tears.

"Serves you right, I hope it hurts... ow..."

"Haha..." Chen Nan couldn't help but give a big laugh. "How was it? Did it feel better? If I throw you again, your beautiful butt might have to 'fight to see whose superior' with the Third Prince's."

The princess hatefully glared at Chen Nan and fiercely said, "Wretched guy, you actually have the impertinence to treat me like this. Sooner or later, I'll have you killed. Ow... it hurts..."

"Wife, actually, I know I can't blame you for this; I know you're hungry. But next time, you must remember you can't eat your husband's shoulder. Alright, let's go find a comfortable place, then eat something there." Chen Nan smiled. This time, he 'cautiously and solemnly' hugged the princess. After that, he carried her on his shoulders, disregarding her cursing.

"Chen Nan you wretched guy, how can you treat me like this? No matter what, I'm still a royal princess, how can you carry me on your shoulders like prey? You've sealed my whole body, so can't you at least let me walk on my own?"

"No way, that's too slow."

...

After crossing over two mountain peaks, a light blue jade-like band of land emerged at the base of the mountain. A clear spring running down the mountain converged with a brook meandering through the rest of the mountain range. Even from a great distance, the crashing of water could be heard. Under the scorching sun, this sound was without a doubt the most alluring melody to hear.

The princess's eyes shone. Cheerfully, she said to Chen Nan, "Degenerate, there's a river up ahead. Let's go immediately, I'm about to die of thirst."

"Okay, let's take a rest over there and eat something."

The brook was unbelievably clear. The riverbed was littered with pebbles of assorted colours. Small fish swam around cheerfully and lightheartedly, unafraid of the presence of humans. After washing his face, Chen Nan threw off his shoes and socks, soaking his two feet in the cool, refreshing river water. He felt the torrid heat be swept away with the current.

The princess was placed on the shore. As she watched Chen Nan leisurely refresh himself in the river, she resentfully shouted, "Smelly thief, how can you leave me under the scorching sun while you go cool down by yourself? You're so selfish!"

"It's so comfortable!" Chen Nan exaggeratedly stretched out his arms. "Demonic wife, don't be in such a rush. You wait here for a bit first. Wait for me to return from hunting and I'll give you a period of freedom."

Chen Nan put on his socks and shoes and headed towards the nearby forest.

The princess incessantly cursed, "Hey, degenerate, smelly thief, come back here. How can you leave me here by myself? What am I supposed to do if a beast happens to come? You deserve to die, you bastard."

In a short while, Chen Nan returned from his hunt in the forest. He held two plump snow fowls in his hands. He called out to the princess, "Demonic wife, this time you have to be convinced. Look, delicious game of the highest quality!"

The princess took a look at the snow fowls. They were completely white with bright wings. She reprimanded Chen Nan, "How can you be so

cruel? These two birds are so cute, how could you slaughter them like this? You're a butcher!"

"..."

"You're a murderer!"

"..."

"You're the devil!"

"..."

"You're a guy without any sense of humanity!"

"Enough, please! These two snow fowls are nothing more than food to allay our hunger. You don't have to elevate them to the status of humans, alright? If you truly have compassion, then you wouldn't have treated me like that before. I know you're a person who has a close relationship with your family of devils."

Chan Nan reached out and gave the princess a few pats on her body. "I'll give you some freedom for a little while, but you mustn't run away. I've sealed all of your martial arts. In this condition, you're no different than an ordinary person. If you run around everywhere and aren't safe, then you'll probably end up as some beast's dim sum."

The princess grinded her teeth in indignation and angrily cursed at

him. Chen Nan ignored her, pulling out the longsword at his waist to tidy the plumage of the snow fowls.

The princess took a glance at the wide expanse of mountainous forest and took a glance at Chen Nan. She was helpless. She whipped around and headed towards the riverbank, but right when her body was turned, a proud smile emerged from the corner of her mouth. If Chen Nan had seen it, he definitely would have shivered with fear; this was the princess's signature move – a demonic smile.

Treading over the pebbles, the princess walked towards the center of the brook. The cool river water soaked through her clothing. She clasped her two hands together, cupping some water to her lips. After that, she took off her hair clip. Like a waterfall, her shining, long, black hair unrolled and dispersed over her shoulders. The water wet her hair. Like a lively fish, she swam to and fro unhindered in the river.

Chen Nan sharpened two wooden sticks, pierced the two cleaned snow fowls with them, and began roasting them. Shortly later, an aroma wafted towards him. The snow fowls gradually turned a splendid red and a glossy golden. Oil dripping into the open fire made a sizzling sound. Balminess spread throughout the riverbank, forcing Chen Nan to drink a gulp of water.

At the same time, the princess was diving into the depths of the water, only reemerging about half a minute later. Her drenched hair was covered in water droplets. Her complexion was elegant and refined. She seemed like a luminous hibiscus causing ripples as she emerged from the water.

Chen Nan turned his head and, by lucky coincidence, saw this scene of

a lotus rising from the water. The scene made him temporarily lose his bearings as he murmured:

Goddess of Luo...

Her slender, curved throat and neck,  
Immaculate skin emblazoned for all,  
Bare of cosmetics,  
And fruitless leaden powder.  
Cloud topknot erect,  
Exquisite eyebrows gracefully arched.  
Red lips shining from without,  
White teeth dazzling from within,  
Glowing eyes of longing,  
Dimples of overpowering authority.  
Precious beauty of splendid elegance,  
Placid manner of unrestrained form.  
Tender sentiments, graceful demeanor,  
Allure etched in every word...

[T/N: Chen Nan is quoting poorly translated poetry by Cao Zhi, Cao Cao's son: 「.....延頸秀項，皓質呈露。芳澤無加，鉛華弗御。雲髻峨峨，修眉聯娟。丹唇外朗，皓齒內鮮，明眸善睞，靨輔承權。瑰姿艷逸，儀靜體閑。柔情綽態，媚於語言.....」from 《洛神賦》.]

He became entranced as he watched the princess in the water. He couldn't help but recall the scene of the princess when he had first seen her. At that time, she wasn't even covered in a thread of clothing. She had been as beautiful as a spirit, just like a little fairy. Chen Nan stuck the two sharpened wooden sticks holding up the roasted snow fowls into the

ground and slowly headed towards the princess. Sitting at the shore, he absent-mindedly watched her.

Slowly, the little fairy-like spirit made Chen Nan recall warm memories hidden deep within his mind. The beautiful image of a girl gradually emerged in his mind. The resurfaced feelings and scene made him recall her from his heart – Yu Xin.

Gradually, his eyes lost focus as the distant memories began to resurface a bit at a time. He felt as if he had returned ten thousand years into the past. At the moment, it seemed Yu Xin was gently walking towards him. She was smiling sweetly, a beautiful longing in her eyes. He seemed to hear the cheerful chatter and laughter of a beautiful woman in his ears...

He awoke from his dream, heartbroken. He knew that Yu Xin couldn't possibly reappear. Ten thousand years ago, the ascended immortal Depraved Peerless Expert Dongfang Xiaotian had battled with his father, Chen Zhan. He had attacked the Chen Residence at night and delivered them a crushing defeat. For the purpose of saving Chen Nan's life, Yu Xin had endured the Depraved Supreme Attack: the Ten Heaven-Splitting Strikes. Every inch of her blood vessels had snapped. In the end, she sealed herself within Baihua Valley's Death-Warding Pass.

"You were still comforting me even at the very end, wanting me to live on well..." Chen Nan shut his eyes. Tepid tears flowed out of his eyes and down his cheeks.

"Can you really comprehend and figure out life and death? Is it something you can just overcome and leave? Can you really meet me again? I know it's all impossible; that was our final parting! Yu Xin..." Yu

Xin was the eternal pain in Chen Nan's heart, his lifelong regret.

Only after a long time did Chen Nan's mood gradually calm. Using the river water to wash the tears off his face, he softly said, "I thought I already let go of all those matters from ten thousand years ago... ai! There are some things that people will never be able to forget. The truth that's engraved in my bones and inscribed in my heart will never be erased. Yu Xin, I turned my back to your wish ten thousand years ago. Not too long after you left, I abandoned myself in despair. Without telling father, I secretly went to a duel to the death... I didn't think I'd be rebirthed ten thousand years later. Life is but a dream. This time, I'll definitely live well."

"I know I'll never be able to forget about you, but I still need to say it: let bygones fly away!"

Suddenly, wave after wave of white mist rose from the brook. The water surrounding the princess seemed to be boiling, constantly churning out surging bubbles that sent out heat waves when they popped with a splash. Steam curled and lingered at the surface of the river. The little fish swam all over the place under the water, panicking and in disarray.

The princess stayed motionless in the water. Her skin was a glistening scarlet with a dim circulating incandescence. The white mist made her appear even more elegant and refined.

Chen Nan was utterly shocked. He knew that the princess's blood was currently boiling. Her vital qi was circulating with a speed a hundred times faster than normal. He cursed, "So muddleheaded, how could I overlook the Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus."

He sprinted towards the river and when he arrived in front of the princess's body, he threw out his palms in a flurry to slap major acupoints all over her body. Perspiration began to run down his face, not because of the boiling river water, but because of his urgency. He already sent out over ten palms, but his palm strength was obstructed by a force whenever his palms made it within half a cun from her body. He simply didn't have the strength to seal even half of her acupoints.

Not only had the princess's formerly sealed acupoints all burst open, but the vital qi in her body was continuously circulating throughout her blood vessels. A layer of protective vital qi had taken form on the surface of her body causing all of Chen Nan's palm strength to dissipate into nothingness.

Suddenly, a great force propelled outward from the princess's body, giving Chen Nan a jolt and pushing him to a reclining position on the surface of the water. The princess was the epicenter of a monstrous wave of water. The Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus's medicinal strength was finally completely unleashed.

Chen Nan sprang out of the water and hastily ran towards the shore.

The princess shouted, "You want to run? It won't be that easy!"

Another monstrous wave emerged from the middle of the river and smashed into Chen Nan's back. He staggered, almost stumbling.

The princess, like a mistreated water fairy, leapt from the surface of the water. In a flash, she arrived behind Chen Nan. Gnashing her teeth, she

sneered, "Heihei, degenerate, smelly thief, I've tolerated you for how long now? I can finally get my revenge." With that said, she delivered a palm towards Chen Nan's back.

Chen Nan hastily turned around to face the attack head on, fiercely battling with the princess directly. In the middle of the water, the two of them twisted and turned. The traces of fists and afterimages of kicks were flying, creating a raging gale. Waves rolled in the brook. Turbulently surging vital qi recklessly splashed water all over the place. Now and then, little fish and shrimp would be caught in the waves and rolled onto the shore to be left leaping and frisking about for their lives. Although Chen Nan was battling with his full strength, the difference between his and his opponent's cultivation was simply too large. After over ten exchanges of blows, he was kicked in the left rib by the princess. He heavily toppled into the water with a plop.

The princess vaulted towards him at breakneck speed and sealed his acupoint. She grabbed him by his neck and dragged him to the shore. After arriving on the shore, she used her skills to immediately dry her drenched clothes. She gave Chen Nan a cold laugh, "You bastard, I bet you didn't think I'd descend upon you again so soon, eh?" Recalling how Chen Nan had treated her, the princess simply went insane. With a shriek, she beat the living crap out of Chen Nan.

"Smelly thief, degenerate, to think you'd have the impertinence to treat me like that. Hitting me, kicking me, grabbing me..." The princess had put aside her image as a princess for a while now. At the moment, she was simply an angry girl throwing a fit.

Chen Nan screamed in misery repeatedly. In a short amount of time, his head was swollen like that of a pig's.

"Little demon, you... the way I treated you before could be considered as upmost benevolence, you... aiyah..."

She was fine if she didn't hear him say a word, but once she heard him mention past events, the princess's two eyebrows would suddenly bend angrily, her gorgeous complexion covered with a chilly frost.

"You still dare to bring up what happened before?! You... you damn bastard, you'd actually treat me in that unreasonable way, I want to kill you!" Remembering the profanity that the repulsive guy in front of her had spouted towards her highly royal princess, she felt beyond ashamed and resentful. She picked up the nearby longsword and walked towards Chen Nan with murderous intent.

Chen Nan's face turned miserable. Just a moment ago, he had vowed in his heart to Yu Xin to live on well. In an instant, he was on the brink of death again. The pace at which the situation turned was astonishingly fast.

The princess suddenly smiled. Her smile was filled with all kinds of flattery, but in Chen Nan's eyes, it was undoubtedly the smile of a demon; her smile was brimming with viciousness.

At first, the princess had wanted to use the sword and put an end to him and be done with it, but she suddenly remembered that Houyi Bow was in his possession. She recalled that time in the forest when this useless guy had reversed heaven and earth with three arrows and ended up as the ultimate winner. It was obvious that this seemingly mediocre and ordinary guy wasn't that simple. Otherwise, there would be no way

for him to be able to break the seal put on the Godly Bow. And again when he had confronted the ancient giant, he had shot out an arrow that had paled the world. He and the Godly Bow had become one, emanating an endless light. Even now, the princess still couldn't help but be moved.

In her mind, she was constantly calculating. If she were to vent her anger out on him and kill him, there would no longer be anyone who knew about the humiliation that the Empire of Chu's princess had suffered under that bastard's hands. But if she were to bring him back to the imperial palace and let him take control of Houyi Bow, then the Empire of Chu would definitely gain another exceptional expert.

Weighing the pros and cons, reason prevailed over her impulsiveness. The princess decided to spare Chen Nan's life and bring him back to serve the Empire of Chu. But still, her heart was completely unwilling. Inwardly, she was full of hate and resentment over the various rude things that he had done to her. Fiercely, she stared at Chen Nan and grinded her teeth. "Degenerate, do you want to live?"

"Of course I want to."

"Okay, I'll give you a chance. Pledge to never mention the matters that have occurred between the two of us. Ever. Always leave it in your mind only. Can you do that?"

Chen Nan already knew what the princess was thinking. She definitely recognized that Chen Nan had the capability to draw back Houyi Bow and wanted him to keep wielding it, but at the same time, she was worried about people finding out about how she was humiliated at his hands, making her lose face. Figuring out this crucial point, Chen Nan agreed without a moment's notice.

"Alright, I guarantee I won't mention to anyone the things that have happened. Oh, nothing has ever happened between us, so there's nothing that I can mention, right?"

Obviously, the princess was very pleased with Chen Nan's answer. She coldly laughed, "I'll consider you clever. I hope you'll always be this clever."

"I certainly won't make Your Highness the princess disappointed."

"I hope your words and actions coincide."

The princess used the longsword to prod at Chen Nan's lapel. With a shake of her hand, she sliced off a length of his lapel and then pointed the longsword at his finger."

"Ah, what are you doing? You... do you want to back out now?"

The princess mocked, "Hmph, guts the size of a mouse."

All sorts of feelings swelled in Chen Nan's heart. He wholly did not expect that in only half a day's time, he would again be under the little demon's control. If he wanted to escape from her 'demonic clutches' this time, he'd need a divine intervention.

Seeing the fear across Chen Nan's face, the princess happily smiled. She used the longsword to cut open Chen Nan's right middle finger. She

reached out and gave him a few pats on his body and said, "Smelly thief, hurry and write a contract selling yourself to me."

"Ah? A contract selling myself to you?"

"Right. Today, you need to sell yourself to me as a slave in return for your life. From today onwards, you'll be my privately-owned property."

"What? This... didn't I already pledge an oath? I absolutely wasn't speaking irresponsibly, so why are you still so worried? You don't have to do it like this, right?"

"Hmph, you shameless degenerate, what kind of trustworthiness do you have? Only a fool would believe your oath. Hurry up and write."

Chen Nan was exceedingly depressed. Just now, the princess had been his prisoner. In an instant, he became the other party's slave instead. If he had the strength, he'd instantly strangle the little demon. He inwardly regretted the sordid and contemptible way he had treated her. He truly regretted his past conduct!

The little demonic princess sneered, "To be benevolent to one's enemies is to be merciless to oneself. You shameless idiot – serves you right!"

Chen Nan wanted to vomit blood. He really wanted to give himself some slaps in the face.

"Smelly thief, hurry up and write."

The princess's words dragged Chen Nan back to reality. He wrinkled his eyebrows. "I... won't... write."

"What? You dare not to?" The princess was furious.

"It's not that. I'm illiterate." Chen Nan was remorseful and annoyed, as well as somewhat embarrassed. For the past year since he began his new life, he had only learned Tianyuan Continent's spoken language. As for the written language, he hadn't had the time to learn it yet.

"You're illiterate? Haha~!" The princess impudently laughed out loud. "With just one look at you, it's obvious that you're not a good person. To go as far as to be too lazy to learn how to write, you're truly a degenerate."

Now, Chen Nan was suffering.

The princess lifted up the longsword and dragged it across the ground. Graceful calligraphy appeared on the ground following it.

"Write what's written according to the ground."

Someone beneath the eaves of a house has no choice but to bow their head. Chen Nan forced himself to write up the contract to sell himself off as a slave. Then, he pressed down his finger, leaving his fingerprint as the signature. He sighed in his heart, "I've fallen from heaven to hell!"

[T/N: 在屋簷下/beneath the eaves of a house; meaning 'under someone's control'.]

# Volume 1 Chapter 9: Regression

The princess held the contract for Chen Nan's enslavement in her hand. Furrowing her eyebrows, she said, "So unsightly. What kind of broken calligraphy is this? It'd look better if a spider crawled around in the dirt instead. You're such a bad example, how could you not even learn how to write? You're really... ai! How could our Chu Empire produce someone like you? You're seriously our nation's disgrace, our ethnic degenerate."

Fainting! Chen Nan didn't dare rebuke her. With a wooden face, he sat down on the ground.

"You smelly thief, you really are terrible, to have the cheek to hit me like that..." The princess's face flushed red with shame and resentment as she spoke. She turned around and ran into the forest. She shortly returned carrying a branch with the thickness of a bowl. Towards Chen Nan, she ordered, "Lie on your stomach!"

Seeing the princess carry a thick branch that was rather disproportional to her dainty body, Chen Nan quickly turned fearful.

"Your Highness the princess... you..."

The princess rudely pressed Chen Nan against the ground. Wielding the thick branch, she gave Chen Nan three heavy spanks to his bottom.

"Ah~!" Chen Nan let out a miserable shriek. "Your Highness the princess, if you beat me so severely, how can I escort you out of this

mountain?"

The princess seemed to find reason in his words. She couldn't just carry him on her back like a flagpole and leave. After giving him two more brutal spanks, she threw the branch on the ground. In pain, Chen Nan let out another shriek, "Little demon, I only gave you a few gentle pats, you don't have to..."

Hearing Chen Nan's words, the princess immediately became enraged and hatefully said, "You damn guy, you still bring that up? I'll hit hit hit hit hit you!"

After another round of Chen Nan's screams, the princess threw the thick branch to the side.

"Hmph! I'll consider it even for now. When I have the chance, I'll properly sort you out again, you smelly thief!"

Suddenly, the princess smelled the aroma of the roasted snow fowls and couldn't help but exclaim: "It smells so good." She went over to the open fire and pulled out one of the sharpened wooden sticks stuck to the ground. A roasted snow fowl was hanging off of it. With a glance at the golden colour of the snow fowl, she took a soft bite.

With a bite of the glossy, aromatic snow fowl meat, she let out a sigh of praise. "It's succulent and tender. The flavor is rich, but the fat isn't too greasy. It really is delicious."

Perhaps it was because she had been hungry for so long, but the

princess no longer maintained her princess image. She impaled the wooden stick back into the ground and with one hand, she tore off a drumstick; with the other hand, she tore off a chicken wing. She took massive, ravenous bites, not at all like a lady.

Chen Nan grimaced in pain as he climbed up off the ground. Seeing the princess's table manners, he swallowed a mouthful of saliva and moved forwards.

"What are you doing? Back up a bit away from me. Whenever I see you smelly thief, I get angry," the princess resentfully shouted at Chen Nan.

"I only want to get my snow fowl." He moved his hands towards a snow fowl.

"Don't touch that snow fowl."

"Why?"

"You dirty bastard, since you treated me so poorly before and did all those bad things, hmph, as punishment, you have to fast for three days."

"If it's like that, I won't have the strength to walk. We're in a boundless mountain range right now, how could I burden Your Highness the princess like that?"

The princess rolled her eyes. With a ridiculing expression, she smiled. "Here, I'll give you this, and this too."

The princess held in her snow white hands the chicken head and the chicken butt smeared in her greasy fingerprints. Seeing the princess's hateful smile, Chen Nan seriously wanted to disregard everything and lunge at her to pinch her cheeks. Pinch them fiercely!

"Will you eat it or not? If you don't eat it, I'll throw it away, but you don't get to eat anything else." The princess gave him a wicked smile.

"I'll eat it!" Chen Nan grinded the chicken head and butt in his teeth, as if he were ferociously tearing at the princess herself.

"Smelly thief, eat a little slower, no one is going to fight with you over it. Here, you can have this part too." The princess giggled and tore off another chicken head and butt, handing it over to him.

"Oh, it smells so good. Its flavour is really too wonderful. You degenerate, you're not cultured, and you're gluttonous. You don't need to chew it with so much strength." The princess ate as she scolded him.

Chen Nan quietly said, "Demon, you're still a royal princess. Take a look at yourself. You're holding a drumstick in your left hand and a chicken wing in your right. Your little face is completely red, and oil is drooling from your mouth. It's really—"

"You smelly thief, what are you muttering about?"

"Oh, it's nothing." Chen Nan didn't want her to get the wrong idea. He shut his mouth and didn't say anything else.

In the end, the princess handed Chen Nan the remainder of the snow fowls and said, "This princess is too merciful. Remember, you must nicely repay me and earnestly carry out my every command."

Chen Nan was depressed, but he could only vent his anger in his mind. "Repulsive! The snow fowls were obviously prepared by me. Heaven, do you still want to play around with me? Why have you allowed me to fall into this little demon's clutches again?"

The princess ran over to the riverbank to give her hands a wash. She returned and dried her hands off on Chen Nan.

"Wa, you smelly thief, you're really sloppy. How can your clothes be this filthy? It sickens me to death." With that, she ran back to the riverbank to give her hands another scrub.

Chen Nan didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

"Smelly thief, turn around," the princess rudely ordered. Then, she took off her shoes and socks, exposing two bright, clean, jade-like bound feet, and began wading through the water, raising bubbles. Finally, she tired of her play and took a seat at the shore, but the moment she sat down, she gave out a cry, "Ow! It hurts."

She quickly jumped up from the shore and massaged her butt with her two small hands. She had been thrown to the ground twice by Chen Nan. At that time, all of her martial arts had been sealed by him. As a result, whenever her butt collided with the ground from the fall, it truly hurt. Even now, it still ached. Becoming embarrassed, the princess became

angry and shot a fierce glance at Chen Nan. Her eyes were breathing fire.

"Wretched guy, you're still eating? You really have an appetite!"

The princess harshly walked towards him. Chen Nan had just put the last piece of fowl meat into his mouth. For the sake of venting the fury in her heart, the princess shoved him over without so much as an explanation.

Chen Nan's recently devastated butt immediately collided with the ground. A bloodcurdling shriek echoed through the forest, capable of making one tremble with fear.

"You degenerate, you dared to treat me like that? Serves you right!"

An angel and a demon in the same body; beauty and viciousness in coexistence. The princess had the appearance of an angel, but the nature of a demon. Anyone who saw this girl that was delicate as a flower and as refined as jade would never suspect her of being a troublesome little witch.

After Chen Nan fell back into the little demon's clutches, the journey was filled with suffering. As revenge, the princess's actions towards Chen Nan became increasingly brutal.

After two days, the princess and Chen Nan finally left the mountain.

When the princess had entered the mountain with her party, she had brought some clothing and other personal items, but after battling the

Monolithic Snake and the fight in the forest, she had lost nearly all of her travel goods. After coming out of the mountain, the two's clothes were ragged. Their clothes were thoroughly ripped open by thistles and brambles in the forest, but they didn't have any other clothes to change into.

"Smelly thief, what are you looking at? Turn your head."

The princess's clothes weren't completely covering her body; some of her snow white skin was exposed. Walking in front, if Chen Nan didn't carefully lower his head or he seemed to be looking to the side, he would incur a reprimanding from the princess.

With the emergence of an obscure little town in the distance, the two of them looked at it as though it were a relic from the past. Since departing, they hadn't seen any signs of human habitation in the mountains. Finally, they've arrived on land inhabited by other people. Entering the town, they looked at the various pedestrians walking about. The two of them couldn't help but well up with cordial feelings. They felt everyone was kind. Of course, the two of them absolutely didn't see each other as kind.

The pedestrians on the street looked on in bafflement at the youngsters dressed in ragged clothes. Chen Nan's appearance was average and only attracted the attention of a few people, but the princess was naturally beautiful. Even though her clothes were utterly destroyed, it was hard to conceal her complexion. She attracted the attention of an overwhelming majority of people.

The two of them were unaccustomed to being watched like this by everyone and hurriedly fled into an inn. First, the princess wanted to take her pearl hair accessory and hand it over to the innkeeper and have him

sell it at a pawn shop for some money. Then, she'd have him buy them some new suitable clothes.

Naturally, the royal princess's pearl hair accessory was not some ordinary treasure. The lustre and size of it was all the best of the best. Seeing the greedy look in the innkeeper's eyes, Chen Nan knew that this shark was definitely trying to profiteer off them. But seeing as the treasure in question was the princess's, he felt it unnecessary to warn her.

Just as Chen Nan predicted, the innkeeper horribly ripped them off, offering them a considerably lower price than its value before leaving. The clothes he had brought them were expensive enough to scare people, but they were brightly coloured and well-fit, making the two youngsters formerly dressed in shabby clothes look completely new.

The princess's innate grandeur and temperament naturally began to show itself. In the time it takes to raise a hand or move a leg, her royal, majestic presence was unravelled. But whenever she faced Chen Nan, her royal temperament would vanish completely. To outsiders, she seemed to be a little fairy, but in Chen Nan's eyes, she was a little demon who bared her fangs and brandished her claws.

When it was time for a sumptuous banquet, the two of them ate like wolves and tigers, as if they had forgotten each other's identities and only wanted to wholeheartedly annihilate the food in front of them. Although there was an endless supply of game in the mountains, there was obviously no seasoning to use. The flavour and freshness of the game couldn't compare to the exquisite cooking in front of them.

After enjoying their scrumptious meal, the princess gave Chen Nan a firm look, wanting to give him a punishment, but endless drowsiness

took control of her instead. The thrilling experience in the mountains had left her utterly exhausted, so she could only drop the subject. After hitting over twenty acupoints on Chen Nan's body, she felt reassured and dragged him to another room.

The princess's body was exhausted. She lied down on her bed and fell into a sweet sleep, a satisfied smile appearing on her rosy little face. Gentle moonlight shone into the room, making her body emit a certain pureness and holiness. She was an angel exiled from heaven to the mortal world, exceptionally peaceful and incomparably cute.

Chen Nan lay stiffly straight on his bed. His body was incomparably rigid. He constantly used his ancestral profound skill to attack over twenty of his sealed acupoints, but the seals only loosened a bit. At this rate, he wasn't even sure he'd be able to release them by dawn the next day. His ancestral profound skill was truly profound, it was just that too many of his acupoints were sealed. In the end, he gave up.

Like water, moonlight shone into the room. Chen Nan contemplated many things. Ten thousand years ago, his family was illustrious, and his status was glorious. Ten thousand years later, he'd somehow become the lowly prisoners of others. He forced a bitter smile at the corner of his mouth. Once upon a time, his family was illustrious, but his life was pale. He thought to himself, "Now maybe it won't all be the same, right? But that princess is really a bit too terrorizing..."

As his train of thought trended towards the princess, he head began to feel exceptionally ice cold and insufferable. It was only just then did he realize that his sleeping posture was abnormal. Chen Nan yelled in his mind, "That damn little demon, she'd actually... actually make the metal railing my pillow. I..." He held in the urge to curse aloud.

Early in the morning, the town was noisily clamouring. A large number of troops were rushing towards the town. The town's residents were anxious and uneasy, suspecting a war had broken out. After all, the continent had been peaceful for many years. If no war had broken out, this border town would definitely not bear witness to such a great influx of soldiers.

Clouds of dust were kicked up as three hundred armed horsemen led the force into the town. Soon after were two thousand foot soldiers. Due to the sound of people shouting and horses neighing, the town's residents took shelter one after another. The army blockaded all the roads in town. As an officer went to question the town's pawn shop, three hundred cavalrymen, like tigers and wolves, rushed forward, encircling the shop.

The pawn shop's shopkeeper and two assistants hurriedly exited. Seeing that they were surrounded in all four directions by several hundred horsemen wearing ice cold plate armour and icy, thick swords, the three of them trembled all over and kneeled on the ground.

The officer and ten or so cavalrymen immediately dismounted their horses and walked over to them as they kneeled.

The officer loudly asked, "Who is the shopkeeper here?"

The pawn shop's shopkeeper hurried to kowtow and said, "I-I...am."

The officer said, "Don't be afraid, we did not come here for the sake of malice. Stand up and speak."

"Y-yes... yes."

The shopkeeper and his two assistants nervously stood up.

"I wish to ask you something. Yesterday, did someone come and pawn off a pearl accessory of the highest quality?"

"Yes, yes, yes, indeed there was someone who pawned off a high quality pearl accessory, but that same night, I sent people to deliver it to the head shop."

"En, who pawned it off?"

"It was the boss of our town's Longxing Inn who pawned it, but... but it seemed like he received it from someone else. He was pawning it off in lieu of someone else."

The officer's eyes shone. "Oh? How do you know?"

"Because he wanted me to appraise it and had me make for him a fake receipt with a lower price."

"Alright, bring me to Longxing Inn at once."

The three hundred cavalrymen grandiosely rushed towards Longxing Inn. The infantry followed. Longxing Inn, from all angles, was completely surrounded. Not a single drop could trickle through. The innkeeper was

very frightened and ran outside in his stupor. In a flurry, he took a step forward and said, "M-Mister Officer... is something wr-wrong?"

Sitting on his horse, the officer looked like he was submerged in water. He coldly said, "Yesterday, did you pawn a high quality pearl accessory?"

"Y-yes, I... yesterday, I indeed went to pawn off a high quality pearl accessory in place of someone else."

"Whose place did you take to pawn it?"

"It-it was a pair of young people."

"What kind of people were they?"

"It was a young man and a young girl. The young man was about twenty years old and looked ordinary. That girl was about sixteen or seventeen years old and was exceptionally gorgeous."

A fierce light flashed through the officer's eyes. He took a picture scroll from one of his subordinates and unfolded it. "Did that girl look like this?"

"Yes, it was precisely this girl."

The officer urgently inquired, "Where are they now? Did they leave?"

Seeing the officer's urgent manner, the innkeeper jumped back in fright

and trembled. "Th-they have not left yet. They're still resting in the rear court. Th-they probably have not woken up yet."

As soon as he heard these words, the officer immediately dismounted his horse. With great strides, he entered the inn. About a dozen distinguished soldiers followed closely behind him. The innkeeper followed them from the rear, trembling in trepidation.

At first, there was an occasional tenant who would poke their head out of their room to take a look, but once they saw the heavily armoured soldiers, they immediately shut their door in fright, not daring to take another glance.

The innkeeper pointed. "The man is staying in that room. The girl is staying in that room beside it."

After hearing this, the officer went directly to the girl's room. When he arrived three meters away from the door, he stopped in place before kneeling down. He loudly cried out, "Lord of Fengning City Zhao Sheng respectfully welcomes Her Highness Princess Yu."

The soldiers behind Zhao Sheng all kneeled as well.

Longxing Inn's innkeeper had been foolish. He was so scared that he immediately sat down. He never expected that that beautiful girl was actually a royal princess. He hurriedly kneeled.

After eating in the wind and sleeping outside day after day, the princess was utterly exhausted. It was after great difficulty that she able

to sleep soundly in a soft bed. Up until now, she hadn't woken up yet. It was only when Zhao Sheng called for her three meters from her door did she bewilderedly open her eyes. Now, she heard the shouts and neighs from outside. When she was finally able to clearly make out Zhao Sheng's words, Zhao Sheng was already on his fourth kowtow and announcement.

The princess put on her clothes. Panting with rage, she opened the door and loudly said, "I kno~ ow! Hmph, so noisy."

Seeing the princess's drowsy eyes and her unhappy expression, Zhao Sheng didn't need to think twice to know not to disturb this proud woman as she got her beauty sleep. A cold sweat began to run down his forehead.

"Your Servant Zhao Sheng, under the orders of Her Highness Princess Yue, has come to respectfully welcome Your Highness."

"Jiejie? Did my jiejie come too?"

Zhao Sheng didn't dare to raise his head. Still kneeling, he said, "Yes, Her Highness Princess Yue is outside the town."

"Ah! Really?!" Like a child who made a mistake, the princess quickly slammed her door shut. She said to herself, "This is bad, this is bad. Father and mother must be really worried. Otherwise, they wouldn't send jiejie to personally come find me."

Zhao Sheng and the others didn't dare make another sound. They silently waited outside her door.

After quite a while, the princess slowly opened her door. Now, she resumed the majestic presence of a royal princess. Her tone was indifferent. "Everyone, please rise."

Everyone thanked her and stood up. The princess continued, "You all leave first. Gather all the troops and prepare to set off. I will return to my room to prepare."

Seeing everyone leave the courtyard, the princess became lively again and, like a wisp of smoke, ran into Chen Nan's room. She sloppily released his acupoints and grabbed his ear. "Degenerate, lazy pig, get up."

"Ah~!" Chen Nan let out a miserable shriek as he suddenly leapt off the bed. He incessantly kneaded his very red left ear.

"Hehe..."

Chen Nan was depressed upon seeing the princess's hateful smile. Because his pillow had been a metal railing the entire night, he had only just fallen asleep before being awoken by the princess.

After washing up, the two of them ate a little something that the terrified innkeeper had politely brought them.

Once they left the inn, Chen Nan jumped back in fright. Although he had heard the sounds coming from outside and knew that an army had came to receive the princess and escort her back to the palace, he didn't expect such a great battle array. Both sides of the street were lined with

soldiers. Their shining armour formed a line down the street as far as the eye could see. The middle of the street was completely void of people. The entire avenue was already under martial law. They were quietly and respectfully waiting for the princess.

Zhao Sheng had originally prepared a palanquin for the princess, but the princess waved her lily-white hands. "It's alright, I wish to ride a horse."

Chen Nan inwardly said, "How could a 'terrible' little demon like this sit smoothly and steadily on top of a horse?"

Zhao Sheng personally led the warhorse that the princess was riding. Another soldier went over to Chen Nan to lead his horse.

The princess vaulted onto the horse first, taking the lead, and leaving behind a cloud of dust. Chen Nan and the Lord of Fengning City Zhao Sheng followed closely afterwards. Finally, the three hundred cavalrymen, then the infantrymen, followed. This group of men and horses majestically left the little town.

The town's residents finally let out a breath of air, but the Longxing Inn's innkeeper was still grumbling in complaint. Zhao Sheng had firmly punished him for his greed, giving him a great fine. Within three days, he would have to go to the city lord's residence and pay his fine.

Outside the town was open country. Here, two hundred horsemen were ensuring the safety of Princess Chu Yue. As the princess and others neared them, the two hundred cavalrymen, in succession, offered the princess gifts in their hands.

The distant figure of a slender, lonesome person stood calmly among the rosy clouds. From head to toe, the figure was dressed whiter than snow. Underneath the light of the rising sun, the entire person seemed to gather a layer of golden brilliance, like a fairy that had fallen from the highest of heavens to the mortal realm. The sleeves of the robe drifted in the breeze as if riding the wind.

The princess let out a shout: "Jiejie." She rushed forwards, leaving everyone else behind. When she arrived in front of Chu Yue, she promptly threw herself into her embrace.

The princess wrapped her arms around Chu Yue's waist. Lovingly, she said, "Jiejie, I missed you to death."

Chu Yue doted on her and patted her head. "You really are too mischievous. To actually secretly slip away from the imperial palace for so long, father and mother have been worried to death."

The princess nervously asked, "Has mother's health improved?"

"Why are you asking this? Mother's health has always been well."

"Hmph! That smelly old fogey has the cheek to deceive me," the princess shouted resentfully.

"Hehe, who? We've actually had our little mischievous girl deceived." Chu Yue smiled as she asked.

The princess panted with rage. "Other than my teacher, that smelly old fogey, who else would dare deceive me? Hmph, smelly old fogey tricked me into coming back. He ran off to go see the qilin by himself. I'm furious! Next time I see him, I'll definitely pull on his beard."

Chu Yue laughed. "Don't be so rude towards Elder Zhuge. He's even respected by father and mother!"

"En, then I'll pull on his beard less. Ai, right! Jiejie, how did you find me?"

"You've forgotten. Yesterday, you pawned off your pearl accessory. The pawn shop's boss considered it to be a treasure and sent men to deliver overnight to the head shop in Fengning City. The head shop's boss could make out the royal symbol on the pearl accessory and was really frightened. He hurried and reported it to the Lord of Fengning City Zhao Sheng. Zhao Sheng had just been dispatched by me a few days ago, so I knew about this matter really quickly. Following the vine to get the melon, that's how I found you, you mischievous girl."

Chu Yue clasped the princess's small face. "You've suffered a lot outside. Let jiejie take a careful look. En, your skin has tanned a bit, and you've gotten a little thinner. Next time, you absolutely mustn't run wildly everywhere, understand?"

"En! Jiejie, next time, I won't be able to run around everywhere. My... my imperial guards have..." The princess choked with emotion.

"Be good, don't be so sad..."

"Annoying. I'm already sixteen, yet people still consider me as a child." In a flash, the princess was already smiling again.

"Jiejie, let me show you something." The princess backed away from her embrace and took out a small jade case. She very carefully opened it. Immediately, a strong fragrance wafted forth. A sparkling fiery lotus petal appeared in the small jade case.

"Ah, this is..." Chu Yue was astonished.

The princess proudly said, "Do you know the legendary Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus? This is the present I've specifically prepared for father's sixtieth birthday."

Chu Yue excitedly clasped her hands around the small jade box. "It's worthy of being known as an Immortal Lotus. Just by smelling its scent, one calms down, refreshed and relaxed."

The sparkling lotus petal was even more eye-catching than the luminescence from the rising sun. The fragrance that deeply penetrated into the heart wafted towards Chen Nan and the others. Those soldiers and that officer also praised it wonderfully.

"Ah, why does it seem like there's a tiny bite taken out of the lotus petal?" Chu Yue smiled as she pinched the princess's fine nose. "It must've been you, you little gluttonous cat. You took a bite out of it, right? Hehe."

"Jiejie..." The princess moved her body to the side, acting coquettishly.

"Don't pinch my nose. Otherwise, it won't be as pretty as jiejie's."

"And your mouth is so sweet, it seems to be smeared in honey."

The princess looked at the Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus and angrily said, "Originally, it was an entire petal of the Immortal Lotus. But because that degenerate Chen Nan, that despicable, shameless, vulgar, filthy smelly thief, used tricks to capture me and seal my acupoints up, I ate a tiny bit of the Immortal Lotus to release them."

"What?" Chu Yue cried out in fear.

"It's that smelly thief. I've already captured him." The princess pointed at the distant Chen Nan.

"Degenerate Chen Nan, come over here."

Hearing the princess's shout, Chen Nan felt a headache brewing. He didn't want to go over.

When he arrived close to Chu Yue and the princess, Chen Nan became absent-minded. From afar, he could only vaguely see Chu Yue's peerless magnificence. Now that it was almost within his reach, her beautiful, matchless looks made him feel like he was choking.

Chu Yue was dressed lightly in white. Her build was slender, curvy and beautiful. There was not a single flaw on her graceful, delicate body. She had a jade-like face without the use of makeup, almond-shaped eyes, a fine nose, and perfect cherry lips, and this was just a brief account of her

exceptional appearance. Autumn water is as to divine jade is as to bone, Chu Yue's could be summarized in one word: 'perfection'.

[T/N: 秋水為神玉為骨/autumn water is as to divine jade is as to bone; meaning something like 'the noble temperament from a lady's eyes'.]

# Volume 1 Chapter 10: Fairy Tantai

The princess couldn't be said to not be beautiful. Among mortals, she was absolutely beautiful, but in the end, she was still young. Chu Yue was in the prime of her life. Compared to her, the princess was still far too young and inexperienced. She was like a vivacious elf, teeming with cleverness. She stuck closely to Chu Yue's side, giving her an intimate look that exposed her dependence on her.

A pair of beautiful women; it truly was an exquisite scene.

"Hmph! This shameless degenerate's courage isn't that low, he actually dares to gaze like this at jiejie."

Chen Nan hurriedly saluted. "Formally greeting Your Highness the princess."

Chu Yue dully said, "Forgo your formalities."

"Jiejie, take a look. It's this guy. Don't just judge his foolish, laughable outward appearance. His heart is utterly corrupt. He's the most shameless degenerate, smelly thief."

Fainting! Chen Nan was depressed beyond compare.

"From head to toe, this guy is completely bad. He..." The princess was suddenly somewhat embarrassed. She minced her words. "If not for his

trace of usefulness, I would've already killed him."

Chu Yue gave her a smile. "What did he do?"

"Jiejie..." The princess's face suddenly reddened. She incessantly shook Chu Yue's arm.

From the start, Chen Nan continuously observed this pair of sisters. He never expected the princess to have such a sincere, lovable aspect to her, clinging onto Chu Yue's arm. He simply couldn't believe his own eyes. Was this still that girl who had a fierce battle of wits with that Third Prince Ren Jian, that well-seasoned, resourceful princess? Was this still that girl who tormented him to the brink of death, that incomparable evil little demon?

"Jiejie, look. He's lecherously stealing a glance at you."

The princess raised a little fist and gave Chen Nan a reckless punch.

Chu Yue pulled the princess towards her, a smiling expression across her face. She patted her head. "Alright, tell jiejie. What has happened these past few days you were gone? What did you do?"

The princess immediately perked up with delight. Like a cheerful sparrow, she giggled as she began to tell the story of her thrilling adventures in the mountains.

From rare, strange beasts to giant flying dragons, she described all of the unusual flowers and bizarre grass from the mountains as if they were

living beings with living spirits right in front of them. When her description arrived to the point at which she met Chen Nan as she was bathing in a pool, she instantly sobered up and stopped talking.

[T/N: 奇花異草/unusual flowers and bizarre grass; meaning 'rare/strange things'.]

From only these words from the princess, Chu Yue was able to guess what had roughly happened. Her two eyes couldn't help but emit a cold light, breaking Chen Nan out into a cold sweat.

Chen Nan exclaimed in his mind, "An expert! Her aura was reserved and profound, with somewhat of an enlightened temperament. Is she a xiudaoist?"

Chu Yue's body exuded a faintly discernible Daoist aura, reaffirming Chen Nan's belief that she was a xiudaoist. The cold light seemed to be tangible as it frightened Chen Nan's innermost being. He was unaware whether or not Chu Yue, for the sake of maintaining her younger sister's reputation, would kill him in order to silence him.

Chu Yue pulled the princess farther away from him and whispered, "Tell jiejie, what happened?"

The princess bashfully said, "N-nothing."

Chu Yue's voice was soft. "With jiejie, what do you have to be embarrassed about? Jiejie won't cause trouble for you. Hurry, tell me. Let jiejie hear what has happened so she knows how to handle that degenerate... en... Chen Nan."

"It's like this..." Red-faced, the princess shyly described what had happened at the pool.

Chu Yue's face turned ashen. She almost immediately unsheathed her sword and beheaded Chen Nan who was standing not too far away from her.

"You... why haven't you killed him yet?"

The princess shot the nearby Chen Nan a fierce glance but turned back to Chu Yue and said, "I originally wanted to torment him, but afterwards..."

Listening to how the princess and Zhuge Chengfeng had battled the Monolithic Snake on equal terms, Chu Yue was on the edge of her seat, secretly anxious. When she finally heard how the Monolithic Snake had transformed into a golden dragon before finally being defeated, she opened her eyes wide in astonishment, repeatedly clicking her tongue in praise.

The princess was captivating. "Afterwards, only a single petal of the Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus remained. That smelly thief Chen Nan also ran away... We came across Baiyue Empire's Third Prince Ren Jian. That wretched degenerate was actually unfortunate enough to be captured by them... Then..."

The more Chu Yue heard, the more anxious she became, until her face was icy. She coldly said, "This Ren Jian is too arrogant. To actually dare to attack our Chu Empire and harbor evil plots to steal our national treasure

Houyi Bow and bully my meimei, he truly deserves to die!"

The princess was very unaccepting of what had happened. "If my subordinates weren't already seriously injured, who would have known under whose hand the deer was killed? Even though it was like that, he still fell into my ambush and almost all of his subordinates died."

Chu Yue laughed, "Hehe. Our little mischievous girl actually has some real skill." With that, she became more focused. "And then?"

"And then... and then..." The princess again became bashful.

"Tell me, jiejie won't laugh at you."

The princess steadied her mind. After a breath of air, she told her everything that happened.

Chu Yue's refined eyebrow creased. She heavily said, "Yu'er, you didn't kill him even after he humiliated you; you've matured. You've done very well. If we're able to subdue him, then our Chu Empire will definitely gain another exceptional expert. But you'll have to stop insulting him. Since you've spared his life, he should be extremely grateful; don't let resentment and indignation grow in his heart."

"Don't tell me you want me to cheerfully laugh and chat with that smelly thief? My teeth begin to ache with just the sight of him. He had actually treated me like that before... Hmph! Not killing him is already treating him with utmost benevolence." The princess looked unhappy.

Chu Yue said, "Aren't you usually rather clever? You want him to be deeply grateful, but you don't have to be cheerful around him. You can gain his favour and be dignified at the same time. You just have to make sure you have at least his loyalty, nothing less."

The princess's face was bitter. "I really regret not killing him. As soon as I think about having to see that dirty bastard regularly hereafter, I just want to explode in rage. It makes me furious!"

Chu Yue laughed, "Hehe. You can largely avoid him."

"Ai, this useless guy can actually become impressive when the moment calls for it. Thinking about it just makes me mad."

"You call him useless even now? Could an ordinary person dispel the seal placed on Houyi Bow? Even Elder Zhuge, whose cultivation reaches sainthood, can only draw back the bowstring of the Godly Bow by a hairsbreadth. If his martial arts was ordinary, forget about drawing the Godly Bow's bowstring, would he even be able to lift it up? If this matter were to become well-known, every successful xiulianist would inevitably be alarmed."

The princess seemed to be in thought. Recalling how Chen Nan had confronted the ancient giant, the way he had produced that resplendent golden brilliance, she approved of Chu Yue's words.

"Okay. Next time I won't hit his head anymore, I won't pinch his arm, and I won't twist his ears."

Chu Yue didn't know whether to laugh or cry. She didn't expect the eccentric fairy that was her younger sister would actually take revenge against Chen Nan in this way.

Nearby, Chen Nan was wallowing in dejection not knowing how Chu Yue would handle the 'hoodlum' who committed blasphemies against the princess and her reputation. In a moment, Chu Yue pulled the princess by her hand and walked towards him. Every step was as graceful as a lotus. Her body was lithe and elegant. Her movement truly held myriad exceptional magnificence.

"Young Master Chen."

"Commoner present."

Chu Yue smiled. "Young Master Chen, you need not be so courteous. For my Chu Empire to obtain another remarkable talent, even when meeting the sovereign king you need not stand on ceremony. For all intents and purposes, you will be treated as a state official. Young Master Chen, to be capable of using our Chu Empire's national treasure Houyi Bow, various countries would bestow upon you a high rank; you would be revered by all."

Chen Nan let out a long breath of air. His imagined misfortune hadn't arrived. Instead, it seemed like it was finally the time for his fortune to turn.

Chu Yue continued, "But the fact that Young Master Chen is capable of using Houyi Bow, it is best not to make this public. After all, this matter is too astonishing. In order to avoid unnecessary troubles, I'm afraid we're

forced to offend Young Master Chen and have him be a nameless official."

Chen Nan hurriedly feigned a thankful appearance. "I will heed all of the princess's arrangements, but..."

"But what?"

"Baiyue Empire's Third Prince already knows I am capable of wielding Houyi Bow, will he..."

Chu Yue said, "He won't dare to mention it. He'll be more than happy over the fact that we're not going after him and troubling him further."

Actually, what Chen Nan wanted to say the most was: "Will he send people to come assassinate me?" But listening to Chu Yue's speak like this, he felt it was better to say nothing else.

The princess stood to the side, pouting unhappily. When Chen Nan noticed her stealing glances, she promptly shot daggers at him. To avoid looking for trouble with the little demon, he promptly turned his head to look elsewhere.

Chu Yue said, "Alright, let's be on our way."

The cavalry remounted their horses; the infantrymen returned to their units. The mass of troops majestically set out towards Fengning City.

Chu Yue and the princess unhurriedly led the troops on their horses at

the very front. Chen Nan and the Lord of Fengning City Zhao Sheng followed closely behind them.

Mounted on her horse, the princess shifted her eyes. "Jiejie, did father and mother ask you to come find me?"

Chu Yue reached out her lily-white hands and patted the princess's forehead, smiling. "Afraid? This time, a mythical qilin has appeared at our Chu Empire's western border, attracting the interest of numerous xiulianists from the Tianyuan Continent. A lot of them came to inquire about it. Father was worried and had me bring five hundred elite armoured cavalry to come and take a tour of the place. Of course, if I were to find you, I'd definitely need to grab you and bring you back, hehe."

The princess exhaled. "I was scared to death. I thought you had come specifically for me."

"Do you understand fear now? To slip away and leave without telling anyone, you don't know how worried we all were. Fortunately, Elder Zhuge guessed where you were headed and followed you the entire way."

"Okay, I understand my mistakes."

Chu Yue gazed attentively at the princess. "Yu'er, have you felt anything strange in your body these past few days?"

"Nothing, I've only felt a little warmer, that's all."

Chu Yue said, "I looked through an ancient book. Regarding ordinary

people, heavenly medicinal herbs that are spiritually nurtured are treasures that can be discovered but not sought after. A dose can increase one's cultivation by many times, but nevertheless, people in pursuit of the absolute strongest power avoid it. People who take miraculous flowers and spiritual grass find it incredibly hard to actually dissolve the medicinal strength. Even though only a portion of the medicinal strength is needed to raise one's cultivation by several steps, after that, it will be incredibly difficult to improve their cultivation. Most importantly, after one's cultivation reaches their peak, the negative effects are even more apparent."

"Ah, why?"

"The medicinal strength of medicinal herbs will infuse with your own strength. It will restrain the development of your power and make it so that you will never be able to make a breakthrough."

"Ah, why is it like this? No wonder I've felt a little feverish for the past two days, I haven't fully diffused all of the medicinal strength. What can I do?"

Chu Yue said, "Luckily you only took a smidgen of the Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus. Moreover, the Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus isn't meant for improving one's martial arts, but rather, its main use is to extend one's life. At the moment, your own power is still the dominant force in your body. After we go back, I'll help you use that medicinal strength to refine your own power."

The princess immediately cheered, "That's great! If this happens, then my power will advance another step." She also asked, "Jiejie, why don't you also take a tiny bite of the Immortal Lotus? Wait for my teacher to

return, then he can help you refine it."

Chu Yue smiled. "You little lazy kitten, you're full of tricks. Remember, only cultivate your own power. Only then will your power be the most pure."

Chen Nan, listening from behind them, inwardly nodded in agreement. The contents of the ancient book that Chu Yue had read and the point of view of his father Chen Zhan were in agreement with each other. He couldn't help but inwardly sigh, "It seems in the past ten thousand years, figures still existed that can rival my father's heavenly power. I wonder whether they were able to ascend to immortality, or if they remained forever in this mortal world."

After four hours, the princess and the troops arrived at a small town at the border of Fengning. Chu Yue said to the princess, "Yu'er, go stay at Fengning City for two days. After two days, we'll go back to the capital city together."

"Jiejie, where are you going?"

"I still need to tour the vicinity for two more days, so be patient and wait for me here." Chu Yue arranged for the princess to stay at the city lord's residence and then hurriedly went on her way.

Although Chen Nan had full control over the movement of his body, all of his power was sealed. The tight security around the city lord's residence was also a problem. He wouldn't be able to escape unless his power somehow rapidly improved to rival the heavens.

The princess was extremely bored. In the city lord's residence, people were disorderly running up and about, not even chickens or dogs were left undisturbed. Finally, she recalled Chu Yue's words: if she didn't completely refine the Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus's spiritual energy and augment her own power with it, then she'd find it exceedingly hard to improve upon her cultivation in the future. Bored, she attempted to refine it by herself.

The princess sat cross-legged on her bed. A gentle white light suffused from her body. A faint fragrance floated throughout the room. At the moment, the little demon seemed to be solemn, pure and holy. Not a single trace of naughtiness or stubbornness remained on her face.

Soon, drip after drip of sweat slid down her face. Her skin was glistening scarlet. She was currently forcibly dissolving the Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus's spiritual energy, but the fire attribute spiritual energy was heating up her body causing her to endlessly sweat.

In a moment, the faint white light around her body slowly began to expand outwards. A thin layer of glowing mist took shape in the area surrounding her. The princess's entire delicate body became hazy. The temperature within the room increased more and more. Raging flames flashed and flickered in her surrounding area. At last, the princess could no longer hold out and let out a loud scream, rushing out of the room.

The guards in the courtyard only saw a human figure run towards the garden. After the princess arrived in the garden, she plunged into the garden's small lake with a plop. The city lord's daughter, strolling through the garden, was the first to discover the princess submerged in the water. She screamed, "Not good, the princess is under the water! Come men! The princess is drowning!"

A cluster of guards immediately rushed towards the screams. Chen Nan also heard the yell and was the first to arrive at the scene, just in time to watch the princess climb out of the lake in a sorry state.

The princess was dripping wet from head to toe, particularly embarrassed. To the guards who had arrived after hearing the commotion, she angrily said, "What are you looking at? This princess was hot; can she not take a bath? Hurry and screw off."

An expression of embarrassment on the princess's face made Chen Nan break out into a large smile. Seeing her clothes absolutely drenched, showing off her detailed, delicate body, a ridiculing look appeared on his face. Chen Nan only wanted to follow everyone else and leave, but the princess shot him a seemingly tangible cold light from her eyes, clashing with his amused line of sight.

"Degenerate Chen Nan, come over here." The princess was furious. She used her martial arts to instantly evaporate the water from her clothes as she angrily chided, "Smelly thief, you really have guts, huh? You dare laugh at me. Let's see how I'll deal with you."

Chen Nan let out an exasperated sigh out as his luck ran out. Feeling regretful, he slowly dragged himself towards her.

The princess really wanted to hurt him in order to vent her anger, but in the end, with a shift of her eyes, she suddenly changed her plan.

"Follow me."

Chen Nan assumed a look as if the wind turned desolate and the water turned chilly. With the attitude of a hero who knew he would never return after going off on their journey, he followed the princess into her room.

"Heihei..." The princess let out a smile teeming with malicious intent.

Chen Nan turned cold.

The princess whipped around and began slapping him at various points, sealing over ten of his major acupoints. With that done, she dragged him onto the bed.

Chen Nan thought to himself, "No way, don't tell me she..."

"You smelly thief, your brain must be full of dirty thoughts right now. The look in your eyes makes me sick. You're really too disgusting!"

The princess sat Chen Nan up on the bed. She sat herself cross-legged behind him. She reached out and placed both of her palms onto his back. Her small palms gradually became sparkling like white jade until they began to be suffused with a faint glow.

Chen Nan was alarmed. He sensed the power in his body was quickly being drained away. The vital qi in his myriad blood vessels surged like water towards the princess's devilish hands. The princess grew more and more excited. This was her first attempt at using the Transforming Heaven Thawing Earth Technique to use Chen Nan's power to continuously refine the spiritual energy of the Blazing Inferno Immortal

Lotus.

Transforming Heaven Thawing Earth Technique was famous. At its absolute strongest, it was even capable of melting living material. It was beyond formidable, and a little bit on the eccentric side. This technique's other profound use was precisely to dissolve someone else's energy for one's own use. Of course, this was only for a moment. After a short amount of time, the power that was absorbed would diffuse away.

As the princess's lineage originated from golden branches and jade leaves, she was never once wronged even in the slightest. Chen Nan had captured her and teased her incessantly, causing her great shame and humiliation. Because of this, she had wanted to torment him throughout their entire journey. This time, after seeing Chen Nan's mocking expression, she immediately recalled the events that had occurred a few days ago and instantly became infuriated.

[T/N: 金枝玉叶/golden branches and jade leaves, meaning 'nobility'.]

The plan she had hatched for revenge had made her excited. She had decided to use the Transforming Heaven Thawing Earth Technique for the first time ever to absorb a portion of Chen Nan's power and use it to help her refine the spiritual energy of the Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus. Seeing Chen Nan's sour expression as his power was drained from him, she couldn't help but smile.

At first, the princess was indeed excited. A steady stream of energy surged forth from Chen Nan's body, causing her own vital qi to react wildly with it. The spiritual qi of the Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus gradually began to dry up, cheering her on. But afterwards, the princess began to feel that something was amiss. When she wanted to stop, she felt that her control over the Transforming Heaven Thawing Earth

Technique was almost nonexistent. She wasn't able to stop it, and it continuously operated.

The princess first began cultivating Transforming Heaven Thawing Earth after she had accidentally discovered it in a collection of ancient royal records, but it was merely a remnant of a bigger document. Additionally, she had only spent a brief amount of time cultivating it. She wasn't yet proficient in using it. She was secretly anxious. If this continued, all of Chen Nan's power would be completely absorbed by her. Although she extremely hated this 'smelly thief', she never had the desire to cripple him and rob him of all his power.

Chen Nan felt like ten thousands ants were currently painfully biting at him. All of his power was being forcibly removed from his body. The years he spent bitterly cultivating was ruined in just a moment. His heart felt numb. All his hopes turned to dust. He felt his spirit float out of his body alongside his escaping vital qi.

But when his heart felt dead, when all his hopes were completely obliterated, a feeling that he hadn't felt for ages slowly emerged in his heart. His six senses grew keener and keener. The spiritual awareness that he had lost when he turned sixteen seemed to return to its former glory. Feeling its return into his body, Chen Nan wanted to cry out in excitement.

[T/N: The six senses refer to his eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind.]

He was once revered by others as a genius martial student. He was also once mocked by others behind his back. The origin of all this was simply because he had lost his innate spiritual awareness when he turned sixteen years old. The time when he was between sixteen and twenty was

an unforgettable nightmare. No matter how much effort he put in, his cultivation refused to improve. The frigid mocking and scorching insults that came from behind him blocked out the sky and covered the earth. Heaven's proud son was beaten from the flower fragrant heavens to the endlessly dark hell.

Chen Nan's vision gradually blurred. Tears rolled down his face. A smile and tears. The unwilling in his heart, what he had always dream of, in this one instant, everything changed!

With the return of his spiritual awareness, Chen Nan inspected the circulating vital qi within his meridian channels. Seeing his vital qi surging out of his body like water, he no longer felt vexed. He faintly sensed that the princess had had evil intentions, and it was just by coincidence that it resulted in him successfully recovering his spiritual awareness.

"What's a little bit of power anyway? As long as my six senses regain their sensitivity and my spiritual awareness has recovered, in a short amount of time, I can cultivate it all back and exceed it by many times as well. To take a step forward in Zhenwu, being able to fight on par with eastern xiudaoists and western magi is no longer just a dream. With this step, ascension to immortality is no longer an unattainable flower within the mirror, moon within the water."

[T/N: 鏡中花、水中月/ flower within the mirror, moon within the water; derived from 水月鏡花 meaning 'an imaginary illusion'.]

As they continued, the golden coloured vital qi leaking out of Chen Nan's gradually became thinner and duller. At the same time, Chen Nan discovered some sort of abnormality within his vital qi. Within the bright golden light of the pure essence of his vital qi, there was an unexpected

unmixed light yellow colour.

"This... what's going on? Why is there vital qi that isn't glowing and is such a pale yellow colour?" Suspicions arose in Chen Nan's mind. His ancestral obscure martial technique definitely wouldn't bring about such indescribable vital qi.

Carefully observing it, he discovered that although the pale yellow vital qi was minuscule, it was distributed throughout his myriad blood vessels. If his vital qi hadn't become so thin at the moment, it would be incredibly hard to be able to find this peculiar, light yellow, pale vital qi.

"Is it her..." Chen Nan's heart turned cold. A layer of cold sweat formed on his body.

The peculiar, light yellow, pale vital qi caused him to recall a distant memory. That previous memory, that forgotten memory, that unforgettable memory... the events of ten thousand years ago flashed through his mind bit by bit.

There was once a girl shrouded in mystery. Like a comet streaking across the vast sky, she lit up the entirety of Xianhuan Continent. Regarding that gorgeous, wise, and mysterious girl, no one knew who her teacher was. No one knew where she came from. She wandered between all the big powers of the world. At that time, many major incidents of the continent were connected to her in one way or another. Mysterious, good-looking, wise, countless young men were captivated by her. She was Tantai Xuan.

When Chen Nan turned sixteen, his ancestral profound skill had just

reached the second Chongtian of his Mahayana. Among his peers, his cultivation had been the very best. At that time, he was still high-spirited. That year, the eighteen year old Tantai Xuan searched for Chen Nan. At that time, Chen Nan had been famous. People would immediately cower in fear when they saw him, like he was God. The two of them discussed martial theory. Tantai Xuan's knowledge was extensive and profound, leaving Chen Nan in admiration. Afterwards, the two of them battled. No winner was determined.

After that, Chen Nan became caught in a whirlpool of emotions without an antidote. Deep in his heart, he was infatuated with Tantai Xuan, but he never expressed it outwardly.

During those days when Tantai Xuan visited Chen Nan's home, he discovered that every day, she would cultivate an eccentric technique. The vital qi that resulted from the cultivation of that technique was neither splendid nor bright. It was a dull light yellow. Additionally, its might was rather little. Curious, Chen Nan had asked her what the use of that technique was.

Tantai Xuan had smiled, but didn't answer him. After being questioned over and over again by Chen Nan, she finally profoundly said, "This is an ancient eccentric technique. It allows for your power to reach the heavens. Without experiencing it on your own, it's hard to understand its advantage."

Before too long, Tantai Xuan floated away. Soon after, rumours said that she once again had a xiudaoist on the verge of piercing the sky and ascending to immortality to serve as her teacher. From then on, she devoted herself to cultivating Dao.

Three months after that, Chen Nan's nightmare had begun. His power had taken a giant step back. He had fallen from his position high in the clouds to the bottom of an abyss. He had felt the gap between himself and Tantai Xuan become larger and larger. Ashamed of his own inferiority, his heart abandoned all its fantasies; Tantai Xuan had become a goddess too right for him to reach. He could only silently wish her well...

He suffered, ruminating by himself. He wallowed in despair, bitter and agonized...

Two years later, he met that girl in the mountains. He met that merry girl, that spirited fairy. Yu Xin. A trace of brilliance finally penetrated through the dark haze in the sky...

Suddenly remembering all those past events, Chen Nan's heart turned incomparably icy. Tantai Xuan's unique beauty vanished like smoke in an instant. The perfect goddess toppled over with a loud bang in his heart...

When the princess finally removed the last trace of vital qi in Chen Nan's body, his mind gradually grew more muddled until he completely lost consciousness.

Two days later, Chen Nan finally awoke. Opening his eyes, he saw the princess propping her chin up with her arm gazing out the window, bored.

He moved his body slightly. The princess instantly detected it.

"Ah, smelly thief, you're awake."

Pleasantly surprised, the princess ran over to his bedside. She hardened her face into a wooden expression and said, "Degenerate, my jiejie will come in a moment and ask you what happened. You have to tell her that you were the one who provoked me first. Understand?"

Chen Nan let out an abrupt, annoyed laugh. This little demon truly made him not know whether to laugh or cry. She had laid waste to his power by herself, yet she still needed him to speak well of her. But Chen Nan didn't really particularly resent the princess. In the end, it was because of the little demon that that his spiritual awareness which he had lost for so long and finally returned.

Chu Yue lightly pushed open the door, and said to Chen Nan, "Young Master Chen, you're awake."

"Thank you for your worry, princess."

"Xiaomei is thoughtless. She doesn't know the severity of what she has done. I hope you can forgive me. After returning to the imperial capital, I'll definitely seek someone to recover your power."

Seeing that Chu Yue wasn't blaming her, the princess became vivacious again.

"Be at ease, degenerate. After returning to the imperial capital, I'll definitely find someone to help you recover your power."

Chu Yue gave her a cold glance. "So you know the trouble you've

caused."

The princess charmingly wrinkled her nose.

The next day, Chu Yue and company departed from the small town at the border of Fengning. Five hundred armoured cavalrymen began their trek back to the capital city of the Empire of Chu.

Chen Nan transformed from an 'expert' in the eyes of people back to an ordinary person, but he didn't feel a hint of loss. He believed that in the near future, his name was bound to stun all of Tianyuan Continent.

Throughout the whole journey, Chu Yue treated him with the utmost care. The only magus among the troops was assigned to his side. Every so often throughout the trip, he would cast a recovery spell on Chen Nan to prevent him from becoming tired.

To this, the princess wrinkled her exquisite nose several times. She wanted to say something, but Chu Yue's sharp glances made her swallow her words.

After a few days, the party arrived at an ancient city. When Chen Nan heard that this ancient city was named Tantai, his heart pounded.

The ancient city wall was engraved with years of blue mulberries. The scars from blades and the holes from arrows recorded the wind and frost that the city had endured through warfare. The size of Tantai City wasn't too large; its population couldn't be more than a hundred thousand. The residents within the city were just as simple and plain as the ancient city

itself. Various displays of art on the street welcomed the two princesses.

As they walked towards Tantai City's public square, Chen Nan felt like he was suffocating. A statue carved out of white jade towered on a raised platform in the middle of the square. It was a statue of the incomparable, peerlessly magnificent, awe-inspiring Tantai Xuan.

"How is this possible? How can it be... her!" Chen Nan momentarily lost his bearings. Just a few days ago, the goddess that captivated him so far in the past was now among his shattered dreams. Now, just a few days later, he unexpectedly had the chance to see a statue of her. The affairs of the world are unpredictable. It seemed like a being in the dark had pulled him to this specific place.

The princess's cheerful chatter roused him back to his senses.

"Wow! Fairy Tantai is so beautiful, but we're just as beautiful as Fairy Tantai, xixi."

A faint smile appeared on Chu Yue's jade-like face. Her bright eyes roamed all around. The dimples on her jade cheeks left everyone enchanted.

"You really are shameless, comparing yourself to a fairy."

The princess delicately replied, "I'm comparing jiejie to her. Besides, it goes without saying that we're just as pretty as her."

Chen Nan suddenly tugged at the hand of the magus beside him and

emotionally asked, "Is that Tantai Xuan?"

Hearing his question, the princess ridiculed, "Smelly thief, how can you be so ignorant and inexperienced? Do you not even know that Fairy Tantai is named Tantai Xuan? Oh, I remember now, you don't even know how to write. Ai, what kind of guy are you, without any learning whatsoever..." With that said, the princess assumed a bitter and hateful look.

Chen Nan's voice trembled. "She... isn't she a figure from ten thousand years ago? How can people still remember her?"

The princess wanted to laugh at him again, but she was stopped by Chu Yue. Chu Yue saw that Chen Nan really 'didn't understand' Fairy Tantai. She patiently explained it to him. "After ten thousand years, Fairy Tantai had indeed been forgotten long ago, but a thousand years ago, she once descended upon this city. This was one of the very few vestiges left behind by immortals in our Chu Empire. From then on, people began to remember Fairy Tantai. From this, Tantai City earned its name."

"She... became an immortal..." Chen Nan muttered to himself. His mood was complicated.

Currently, everyone had already walked towards it, but he stood still.

"I thought I already freed myself from it all, but why do all these bits and pieces from my past always emerge in front of me? Tantai Xuan, Yu Xin..."

"The past is like smoke, why does it always linger in my mind?! The past turns into wind, why must it blow so indeterminately, always drifting into my thoughts?!"

## Volume 2 Chapter 1: First Arrival at the Imperial Capital

[T/N: 龍騰/dragon soaring is similar to 龍飛/dragon flying; meaning 'promotion to an official post'.]

Tantai Xuan, the beautiful, wise, and mysterious girl, had already ascended to immortality and left behind an everlasting legend in Tantai City. Chen Nan stood unmoving in the public square, frustrated and at a loss.

"Why... why do you have to treat me this way?" Immortals and mortals were naturally separated. He gazed at the sky and sighed. Chen Nan followed behind Chu Yue and the princess. Muddleheaded, he entered the lord of Tantai City's residence.

Seeing Chen Nan looking like he had lost his soul, the princess resentfully called out, "Degenerate, aren't you a man? I've already said that once we return to the imperial capital, I'll look for someone to help you recover your power. Why do you still have such a lifeless look? Hmph, smelly thief, you're a miser!"

"Yu'er, don't be rude towards Young Master Chen." Chu Yue worriedly said, "Young Master Chen, has the journey been too tiring? If so, we can stop and rest here for two days."

Chen Nan blankly shook his head. "It'll be better for us to be on our way as soon as possible."

"That's fine. The earlier we return to the imperial capital, the earlier Young Master Chen can recover his power."

Chen Nan, perplexed, departed from the ancient, millennium year old city of Tantai. The next two days, Chen Nan appeared to have lost his soul. His two eyes were vacant, without a trace of vitality.

Three days later, a sudden clap of thunder roared into his ears. Like he was baptized with the purest cream, he turned his sights towards the sky. Black clouds rolled across the sky like waves of ink. On the count of ten, various golden snakes scattered from the clouds. The rumbling thunder was like the evening drum and morning bell, reverberating through his heart.

[T/N: 醒醐灌頂/baptized with the purest cream; meaning 'be enlightened with flawless wisdom/knowledge'.]

In a split second, Chen Nan came to a little understanding: the time remaining flies away. As time goes by, the fading forever fades away, unable to turn back. Existence continues to exist as before. Only existence was real. People cannot always live in the past; they can only seize the present. Only then can they be without regrets...

Suddenly, the vital qi that had long since dried up in his body acted like a withered tree coming upon spring, regaining its vitality. Like silkworms, his weak vital qi began to swim around his body. Slowly, the minuscule amount of vital qi remaining gradually expanded. It grew and circulated around his body endlessly as streams, flowing like a faint, cool breeze.

The power that the princess had siphoned away returned to its former state in an instant. Additionally, after an internal inspection, the vital qi in his body was currently purer than it was previously. That peculiar vital qi with the murky yellow colouring was no longer present; it was thoroughly purged from his body. After some time, Chen Nan's emotional state of

mind slowly calmed. Not only was his power restored to its previous state, a ray of light penetrated through the sweeping haze in his mind.

It was heavily raining. A curtain of water lay in between heaven and earth. Chu Yue and company were temporarily stranded within a small town. The five hundred cavalrymen filled all the inns and taverns of the town.

The princess was as happy as a little angel, hopping and skipping around. She was not one whit like that little demon who had been previously scheming in the shadows.

"Hehe, this is great! It's raining, so refreshing."

She half cheered and half greeted Chu Yue. "Jiejie, don't hide inside. Quick, come out, look how refreshing it is out here."

Chu Yue entered the rain, but the dense raindrops didn't land on her body. The raindrops stopped three cun from her body, sliding off to the side. Her formless vital qi shielded her from the rain.

Secretly bewildered, Chen Nan's heart shook. Previously, he had sensed that Chu Yue was a xiudaoist, but now, she was displaying the profound vital qi of a martial artist.

"Could she be practicing martial arts to help cultivate Dao?"

Under the rain, Chu Yue caught the princess's arm and pulled her towards the house. "Look at your appearance right now. Do you still have

even an ounce of the royal air of a princess? You look like an uncontrollable little feral child. If father and mother were to find out, they'd scold you to death..."

"Heihei..." Chen Nan laughed at her predicament from behind the window.

By lucky coincidence, the princess just happened to turn around to see his smiling expression. She angrily said, "Smelly thief, degenerate, you have the cheek to laugh at me, let's see how I'll deal with you..."

The unwilling, crafty princess was pulled into the house by Chu Yue.

After midnight, the rain clouds dispersed. Ten thousand flutes were still. Like water, the starlight of the night sky was resplendent.

[T/N: 萬籟俱寂/ten thousand flutes are still; meaning 'completely silent'.]

Chen Nan calmly stood at the window, bathing himself in the tranquility of the night.

"There isn't necessarily a rainbow after wind and rain, but there is definitely the hope of light. Tantai Xuan... you actually stepped into the realm of immortals. Heaven doesn't treat me too coldly; inevitably, there will be a day I'll break through the barrier guarding the immortal realm. Wait for me..."

After the conflagration of war spread throughout eastern Tianyuan Continent (originally the area of Xianhuan Continent), outstanding heroes

came into existence simultaneously. All kinds of states established their own independent regimes, but the three great powers took up three quarters of the entire eastern territory. The three states were separated like so: the Empire of Chu in the west, the Empire of Baiyue in the north, and the Empire of Anping in the southeast. The three superpowers did not at all have borders with one another; countless small independent states separated them. But the overwhelming majority of the small states served as vassal states to the three superpowers. The Empire of Chu, the Empire of Baiyue, and the Empire of Anping formed a balance of power. The strength of each state was roughly equivalent with one another. For the past while, the three nations had lived together in harmony. A great war had not yet broken out between the nations.

Because the Empire of Chu was situated in the west, bordering western Tianyuan, its capital city served as a major link between the east and the west. The capital of Chu was a major hub; both eastern and western merchants conducted business there. Visitors flowed in and out like unrelenting streams. The booming trade and commerce made Pingyang City incomparably prosperous. It had a population no less than a million. Every day, there was an endless river of horses and carriages. A steady flow of goods and supplies were transported to and from all over the nation along the Grand Canal.

In ten days, Chu Yue, Chen Nan, and company arrived at the outside of the imperial city. They gazed at the city walls of Pingyang. They appeared to form a continuous, uninterrupted Great Wall. It was majestic and imposing. A spectacular sight.

Massive city gate towers were sprinkled along the wall magnificently. The closer they got to Pingyang City, the more stunned Chen Nan became. The capital of the Empire of Chu he had seen ten thousand years ago was one of the grandest cities he had ever laid eyes on. He wasn't

sure how many times grander it was now.

The city walls of Pingyang were at least sixteen meters tall and twelve meters wide. The wall was made of greenish bricks, thick and firm. It was grandiose. A guard tower stood at the city gate. One story of the tower was filled with archers, another with gears. It towered in the sky, vigorously imposing, yet majestic. Outside the city walls, there was a forty meter wide, ten meter deep moat. In the moat, the bluish green water rippled. Boats were scattered on its surface.

The grandeur of the capital city of Chu left a profound impression on Chen Nan.

"Hey, earth to degenerate. You've never seen Pingyang City, but haven't you read about it in books? Oh, I forgot. You're a guy without any skills whatsoever; you've simply never read a book before. Ai, you smelly thief, you really are..." The princess purposely put on the appearance of hating iron for not becoming steel.

[T/N: 恨鐵不成鋼/hating iron for not becoming steel; meaning 'resent someone for not meeting expectations'.]

Chen Nan had been subject to the princess's ridicule throughout the entire journey. He considered it a mental victory to survive through it, constantly consoling himself, "Little girl, I won't lower myself to your level anymore. Just wait for the day you fall back into my clutches..."

Chu Yue took a look at her mischievous younger sister and pulled on her small hand. "Yu'er..."

"Okay I got it, jiejie~!" The princess dragged out the last syllable. With

a tiny voice, the princess murmured, "Always protecting him. Isn't this guy capable of drawing back Houyi Bow? How did he still end up being caught by me... Hmph! Sooner or later, I'll need to show him what's up."

Chu Yue gave her a disdainful look. She flicked the princess forehead. "You..."

Within Pingyang City, there was an endless stream of horses and carriages and an endless flow of pedestrians. Countless stores and shops lined both sides of the street. It was a prosperous sight to behold.

The Emperor of Chu had received the report long ago. Not only had his oldest daughter finished touring and inspecting the west, but the princess who had stealthily slipped away from home was also found and brought back. He immediately became exceptionally jubilant and dispatched men to welcome them outside of the city.

As the welcome party hurried to meet them outside the city, Chu Yue and company already entered, but the princess was nowhere to be seen. Chu Yue jumped back in fright thinking that her mischievous little sister had slipped away again. Just when she began feeling anxious, she noticed the princess emerge from the side of street not too far away.

She saw the princess hold three lamb kebabs in her left hand and two sticks of bingtanghulu in her right. In her mouth, she was biting half way into a chicken silk-roll. Chasing after her were two proprietors of food stands.

[T/N: 冰糖葫蘆/bingtanghulu: Candied fruits on bamboo skewers.]

"Young lady, you haven't given me money for the lamb kebabs yet..."

"Young lady, you can't steal my bingtanghulu..."

"Jiejie... pay..." The princess was chewing something so her words were jumbled.

Chu Yue felt both happy and amused. Indeed, it was impossible to grab a hold of her little sister. The officials sent from the Imperial City to welcome them also couldn't help but laugh, but because they were afraid of the princess's usual 'demonic might', they turned their heads to the side.

The two snack stand proprietors were dumbfounded at the emergence of such a large amount of royal guards in front of them. No longer able to demand payment, they whipped around and fled into the crowd. Chu Yue instructed a subordinate to take some money and follow them.

Five hundred cavalrymen and the welcome party sent from the Imperial City consisting of royal guards protected the two princesses as they leisurely walked towards the Imperial City. Chen Nan was treated as a guest by Chu Yue and had him follow closely behind herself and the princess.

The Imperial City of the capital city of Chu was majestic, dignified, and grand. It was brimming with the air of royalty.

After entering the Imperial City, Chu Yue said to Chen Nan, "Young Master Chen, in a short while, my father the emperor will probably want to receive you. Be patient and wait for us here. No matter what, you mustn't run around and create mischief, understand?"

"Okay, subordinate understands." Chen Nan wasn't too familiar with the proper etiquette required for meeting with royalty or court officials. Until now, his manner of speaking towards Chu Yue was the same as if she were an ordinary person. Now that they were in the Imperial City, he was somewhat nervous.

Chu Yue smiled. "Don't be nervous. Haven't I already told you? My Chu Empire treats people with outstanding ability as state officials. Even when meeting with the emperor, one doesn't have to stand too much on ceremony. You can act just like how you were acting before. It's not necessary for you to be reserved."

Chen Nan exhaled a breath of air. If he were required to kowtow in greeting like those court officials, he would have been troubled to death.

Like a wisp of smoke, the princess had already disappeared into the imperial palace. Chu Yue flashed a smile, turned, and went in as well.

When Chu Yue arrived at the empress's chamber, she found the princess lying in the empress's bosom, chatting and giggling about something. The imperial emperor had a faint smile on his face as he sat across from them.

Chu Yue gave them a polite greeting and took a seat to the side. Of all the daughters of the Emperor of Chu, Chu Han, the one he was most fond of was Princess Chu Yu. The one he relied the most heavily on was the eldest princess, Princess Chu Yue, as well as the Second Prince Chu Wenfeng. He was exceptionally delighted to see that his eldest daughter had not only successfully completed her assignment to patrol the west,

but she had also located his youngest daughter and returned her home.

The princess's mouth was like an uninterrupted torrent. She vividly and colourfully described all her thrilling encounters that she had met with on her journey. The Empress of Chu listened intently, nervous.

The Emperor of Chu waited for her to finish describing her adventure before saying with a deep voice, "I didn't expect that Ren Jian to be so audacious. He actually dares to act maliciously at the borders of my Chu Empire. If it weren't for that fact that I'm unwilling to break the peace that has blessed the continent for so many years and sink our people into deep water and blazing fire, I'd definitely send a punitive expedition to Baiyue Empire."

Chu Yue said, "Father has considered it carefully. You mustn't respond in a fit of rage and go to war. Besides, Ren Jian also isn't being let off lightly; his subordinates were devastated and he himself was seriously injured and escaped in a sorry state."

Chu Han nodded. "We'll consider this an unsettled score with Baiyue Empire for now." Then, he said, "Right, throughout the course of events, it seems like there's someone named Chen Nan. How did he become involved? Yu'er, you only vaguely spoke of him and keep dismissing him. What's the matter?"

Chu Yu changed the subject. "Father, you're the best. For the sake of me, you wanted to send a punitive expedition to Baiyue Empire."

Chu Han had a stiff face. "Hmph, this time, you ran away from the palace without a word. You don't know how worried we were. Tell me,

how should I punish you?"

"Ah? When I just got back, I already begged you not to punish me. Didn't you promise? No way, father is the ruler of a nation. Rulers can't go back on their words. You can't back out of your promise." With that, the princess wrapped her arms around the empress's neck and delicately said, "Mother..."

"Alright, you're already how old now? How can you still whine? Your father is just joking with you, but you must guarantee that something like this will never happen again. Otherwise, forget about your father's promise, I simply won't excuse you."

"Hehe, I know mother is the best." The princess planted a small kiss on the empress's cheek.

"You child..."

The princess turned around to face Chu Han and said, "Father, look. This is the Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus that I braved countless dangers to pluck just for you." She opened the jade case containing the Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus. Immediately, its sweet scent assailed their nostrils.

The Emperor of Chu originally never planned to punish her. After seeing that she returned safe and sound, he was happy enough. Just now, he had only meant to scare her a bit. Seeing her eccentric fairy-like manner made him happy. He laughed with the empress, a wide smile forming on his face. He applied his doting feelings to his speech.

"You little mischievous girl..." Chu Han pinched her smooth, pink cheeks. He turned to face Chu Yue. "Yue'er, are there any abnormalities in the west?"

"There are not. All the xiulianists who came from abroad have all entered the Luofeng Mountain Range. No one has stayed behind within the borders of our Chu. It seems that they all arrived for the sake of that legendary qilin. No one has harbored any intentions to act against our Chu Empire."

"Oh, then that's good. But for a mythical qilin to appear in the Luofeng Mountain Range, that's truly an unusual matter. Could there really be saints in this world?"

Chu Yue smiled. "Isn't the wisest saint you, father? You don't have to worry."

Chu Han smiled in return. "Girl, why are you and your meimei just as glib-tongued as one another? Actually, I'm not too worried. For the past few years, our Chu Empire has prospered and the people are at peace. I expect nothing much will change."

"Right. Father, this time on my expedition to the western borders, I came across a genius. En, strictly speaking, it was meimei's contribution. It was meimei who found him and captured him."

"Oh? What kind of person is he?"

The princess scrambled to say, "He's a degenerate, a smelly thief

without any skills to speak of. He can't even write."

The princess's anxious expression made Chu Yue laugh out loud. The princess, ashamed and angered, said, "Jiejie, don't say it..."

"Haha~!" The emperor and the empress both broke out into laughter simultaneously. They seldom see the spirited princess appear so resentful.

"Yue'er, what on earth has happened?" the empress asked.

Chu Yue said, "Yu'er, can I tell them?"

Upon seeing the hopeful and curious expressions on the emperor's and the empress's faces, the princess released a sigh. "Tell them."

Chu Yue explained the matter involving Chen Nan in its entirety. As they listened, anger began to appear on the faces of the emperor and the empress. Then, they couldn't help but show utterly shocked expressions.

After hearing the whole story, Chu Han said to Chu Yu, "No wonder this mischievous little girl was so vague. It turns out that this happened as well. In light of his conduct and deeds, he truly deserves to die ten thousand times. It's a pity that he's a talent..."

The empress also chimed in, "This guy can truly be considered a genius. As long as he has Houyi Bow in his hands, he's equivalent to an exceptional expert. But his words and actions are deserving of ten thousand deaths."

Chu Han said, "Yu'er, you've really grown up. Under those circumstances, you still realized that he was a talent and spared his life. You've matured. I really don't need to worry so much about you from now on."

Chu Yu pouted her small mouth. "Haven't I always been mature? But right now, I really regret not having killed him at that time."

Chu Han mumbled something under his breath, and then said, "Spare him."

Chu Yue also said, "I also think we should spare him. After all, a talent is hard to come across."

The empress said, "Then we must seal his mouth. We can't let him talk whatever drivel."

Chu Yue replied, "After observing him for the past few days, I found that he isn't that sort of person to shoot his mouth off. He should be aware of the situation he's in."

The empress said, "Then that's good."

Chen Nan waited outside for a long while without seeing so much as a message. In his heart, he felt quite nervous. He imagined that he was currently confined within the gates of hell. Just when his anxiousness reached an extreme point, a palace maid came over to him. When she arrived at his side, she quietly asked, "Are you Young Master Chen?"

"Yes."

The palace maid said, "The eldest princess has ordered me to lead you into the palace and to tell you that you need not be nervous. In a moment when you see His Majesty the emperor, your speech only needs to be a little respectful, that is all."

"Okay, I'll keep that in mind."

The reason why Chen Nan was nervous was because he had insulted the princess previously. He was deeply afraid that the emperor would blame him. After hearing the palace maid's words, he let out a breath of air.

The interior of the imperial pace was richly ornamented. The walls were vermillion and the roof was a bright ivory. It was all splendidly gold and jade. Every palace hall was lofty and high. Their heights were irregular, spectacularly grand.

The Emperor of Chu summoned him to his study. With a look at the tall, stalwart, old man in front of him, Chen Nan kneeled down. Kowtowing in greeting, he said, "Commoner greets Your Majesty the emperor."

"You may rise."

"Thank you Your Majesty." Chen Nan hung his head and stood up to the side.

Chu Han's face was heavy as he coldly said, "Your words and actions towards my little daughter were incredibly rude. What do you have to say about this?"

Sweat appeared on Chen Nan's forehead. "Yes, commoner had been momentarily muddled."

Chu Han thickly said, "You may or may not know, but your conduct is deserving of ten thousand deaths."

This time, the cold sweat on Chen Nan's body even soaked through his underwear.

"However, the eldest princess was persistent in begging me for leniency against you. She said you live in the mountains and fail to comprehend proper etiquette and asked me to pardon you. I did not wish to spare you, but Yu'er also begged for leniency, saying you are a talent and can make up for your previous conduct. Because of them, I will not kill you."

"Thank you Your Majesty for your forgiveness."

Chu Han's voice was no longer ice cold. Slowing down the pace of his intonation, he said, "You don't have to be scared. I've pardoned you, so I definitely won't kill you. Additionally, I've heard that you really are a man of ability. As long as you diligently serve my Great Chu from now on, I absolutely will not treat you unfairly."

"Thank you Your Majesty."

"En! From now on, you need not be as reserved as this. Even when you see me, you don't have to be too courteous. From now on, you'll be one of my Chu Empire's state officials. That is, a secret state official. Others must never find out about the matter regarding your capabilities with Houyi Bow." A smile appeared on Chu Han's face. "Hehe, because Chu has gained you as a talent, I feel very gratified. You need not be concerned about those previous matters. As long as you're diligent and put in the effort, I'll definitely promote you to nobility in the future."

Chen Nan left the imperial palace. As he wiped the cold sweat off his forehead, he emotionally sighed. "That was dangerous. I almost said goodbye to this world. Hu~" He let out a long breath of air. However, the more he walked away from the palace, the more he mulled, and the more he felt that something was somewhat wrong.

"I was almost stunned by that old man. A slap in the face and three rubs; after that old fox gave me a random beating, he gave me a 'candied jujube' to eat afterwards. Using benevolence and might to make me obediently give my life for him. That old fox is truly proficient in managing others. That old guy is worthy to have sat on the throne as the emperor for the past few decades."

[T/N: 打一巴掌揉三揉/a slap in the face and three rubs; meaning 'a fake friendship'.]

"Young Master Chen, what are you mumbling to yourself?" Chu Yue was dressed in fluttering white. She was beautiful beyond compare, refined and magnanimous.

"Oh, nothing. I was just lamenting how large this imperial palace is. I've quickly lost my way."

"Hehe, follow me. I'll lead you out and arrange for your residence without much extra effort."

Chen Nan held a favourable opinion of the peerlessly magnificent eldest princess. Throughout the journey, she had showed consideration to him and helped him escape the princess's 'evil clutches'. Looking at Chu Yue's matchless complexion, her amiable smile, he respectfully said, "Thank you Your Highness the princess."

Chu Yue smiled. She led him away from the imperial palace. Outside of the Imperial City were the residences of the court ministers. The two of them arrived in front of an exceedingly expansive mansion. The decorated archway above the gate was extraordinarily imposing. A formidable guardian lion carved out of white marble stood at either side of the gate. On top of the vermilion gate, a board with a red background and golden lettering was suspended: Residence of Eccentrics.

Chu Yue said, "To be able to live here, one must be somewhat eccentric and have an extraordinary talent. Everyone here has a rather peculiar ability. From now on, you shall be staying here. In the beginning, you won't be too familiar with this place and will be a little unaccustomed to it all, but you'll grow used to it in time."

The interior of the Residence of Eccentrics was divided into innumerable independent small courtyards. It was not at all imposing or luxurious like the other officials' lodgings in front. On the contrary, it held a sense of home, a natural state. Every small courtyard had its own unique landscaping. Upon seeing Chu Yue, the so-called eccentrics and distinguished talents inside smiled and nodded to her, but didn't advance towards her in greeting. It was thus clear that the status of these eccentrics with positions of state officials was quite respected.

Chen Nan's own small courtyard was awfully isolated. Bluish-green bamboo was planted on the western side of his yard. Among the bamboo, a stone table and two stone chairs were hidden from view. The eastern side had a flowerbed. Among them were a few strange-looking stones.

Chen Nan asked, "Will I be living here from now on? I don't have to do anything?"

Chu Yue smiled. "You'll be living here for the time being. After a few days, I'll seek someone out to help you recover your power. After that, I'll seek someone out to teach you some profound martial skills so that you can better understand and utilize Houyi Bow."

"Okay."

"But you mustn't run around wildly all over the place. You aren't too familiar with others yet, so you must by all means not barge into their courtyards as you wish."

Chen Nan thought this was peculiar. "Huh?"

Chu Yue said, "Among these people, some of them research poison techniques to the extent that snakes, bugs, and poisonous grass are all over their courtyards. If you mistakenly enter one of those courtyards, your body might become extremely poisoned. Some others also study magic. Sometimes, their formidable magical energy will destroy their entire courtyard. Also, some others..."

The more Chen Nan heard of them, the more apprehensive he became. Everyone living here was strange and disorderly. It was basically the headquarters of a terrorist organization.

Finally, Chu Yue said, "There are very few guards here, but every day, several unmatched eccentrics will take turns on patrol, so it's completely safe here."

Chen Nan grumbled over and over, "It's over. My big plan to escape has completely fizzled."

After seeing Chu Yue off, Chen Nan's heart grew restless. "Those guys that play around with poison, won't their snakes and bugs end up coming into my courtyard? And those wild magi blowing things up and destroying everything, won't they be living beside me?"

## Volume 2 Chapter 2: Eccentrics

After Chen Nan moved into the Residence of Eccentrics, he began researching his own ancestral profound skill. Now that his six senses were in peak condition and his spiritual awareness had returned, he regained his self-confidence that he formerly had when he was sixteen years old. He had faith that he'd be able to become exceptionally powerful within the shortest amount of time possible.

In the few days since the murky, pale yellow vital qi that had been left within his body by Fairy Tantai had been eliminated, his cultivation progressed a thousand li each day.

Chen Nan did an internal inspection and discovered that the quality of his vital qi had changed. Its colour was even richer than before, and its circulation was even more smooth and unhindered. At the same time, he found that its aura outside his body was even fainter than before, nearly almost impossible for others to observe it. This all made him jubilant. Even exceptional experts who inspected him with scrutiny would find it hard to discover his profound consummate skill.

Chen Nan concentrated his power at his fingertips. Specks the size of a breadth of hair suddenly appeared. He was excited. He was already capable of transforming his vital qi into sword qi and distribute it densely on his body's surface. His ancestral profound skill finally re-entered the second Chongtian of his Mahayana.

A golden light radiated all around his fingers, making them appear as sparkling and lustrous as jade. He stretched out two of his fingers and

lightly placed a longsword in between them. With a bang, the longsword forged from highly perfected steel unexpectedly snapped into two pieces, falling to the floor.

Chen Nan was wild with joy. His power finally returned to the peak condition that it had previously been before Tantai Xuan had schemed against him. Furthermore, he felt a breakthrough could occur at any moment. He'd finally be able to enter the third Chongtian in his ancestral profound skill.

He regained his self-confidence. The blood in his body was boiling. In time, it seemed like he'd be able to produce a bright, several zhang long blade. Then, he'd be able to move unrestrained under heaven.

"Xiudaoists, magi... I want you guys to experience a martial artist whose cultivation reaches a profound level..."

A tremendous explosion echoed throughout the Residence of Eccentrics. Immediately after, the whole place began to sway. Chen Nan promptly ran out into his yard. His neighbour's courtyard was surrounded by an aqua blue canopy of light. The sound of the explosion had come from that exact place. If that aqua blue magical screen hadn't been there, then it's hard to say whether his own courtyard would have been excused.

"Seriously? A mad, destructive magus that has a passion for chaos actually lives next door? Fuck!"

The magical screen gradually dissipated. The courtyard that it had surrounded had already been transformed into a pile of rubble. A small,

withered old woman scorched black from head to toe hovered in midair. She coarsely laughed, "Gaga~! Although it's another failure, I'm only a single step away from success. Gaga~!"

Chen Nan secretly sighed. "Damn, she's basically an old witch!"

"Gaga, I haven't seen you before, boy. Little guy, are you new?" The Old Witch used a wind element magical technique to float over to Chen Nan's courtyard.

"Yes," Chen Nan forced himself to respond.

Just then, a large cry came from the other side of Chen Nan's courtyard: "Xiao Hua, don't run~!"

A big python with brocade scales and the girth of a bucket appeared on the wall of Chen Nan's courtyard. Soon after, an elderly man with white hair and beard leapt on top of the wall as well. He patted the python's head, saying, "Xiao Hua, don't be scared. Don't run around wildly all over the place. Hurry and return to the courtyard."

The big python seemed to understand what the old man was saying and slowly slithered back.

Chen Nan was wide-eyed and slack-jawed. He gave a pitiful shout in his mind. "Seriously, I'm his neighbour too...? Damn!"

The old man noticed the Old Witch in the air and furiously said, "You damn old woman, you keep wrecking the place. You scared my Xiao Hua

into running all over. From dawn to dusk, you can't keep quiet for even an instant!"

"Gaga~! Old Poison Devil, I never came close to your courtyard. I was carrying out magical research in my own courtyard. It doesn't have a goddamn thing to do with you!"

"You agitated my Xiao Hua, Xiao Lu, Xiao Jin... You crazy lady, you must have nothing to do all day long! All you know is destruction."

"Old Poison Devil, you have insulted my dignity and have tarnished my great magical research project. I need to punish you. Ah~! You actually dare poison me... Lightning Ripple!"

The Old Witch descended from midair. Chen Nan's heart instantly became pained. Not because he cared for the Old Witch, but because she had landed on his flower garden that he had loved so dearly.

Meanwhile, the old man standing on top of his courtyard's wall was struck by lightning. His hair and beard all stood on end, every strand erect. He fell head first into Chen Nan's courtyard. His entire body was scorched black and he emitted a wisp of greenish black smoke. A faint smell of cooked meat flooded the area.

"Old Poison Devil, hurry and give me the antidote or else I'll thoroughly electrocute you. Tonight, I'll eat your roasted spare ribs."

"Damn old woman, you even burnt the antidote into ashes, so how can I give it to you? You best recover me so I can hurry and make up the

antidote for you."

Chen Nan stood in his courtyard, looking left and looking right. He wasn't sure which direction was the best.

Spittle frothed from the Old Witch's mouth. Her eyes rolled back into her head. The Old Poison Devil was in even more unbearable pain. He was baring his teeth in agony, groaning.

Chen Nan said, "Would you two seniors please yield a bit. If you continue like this, you'll both lose your lives."

The old witch gasped for air. "Fine. Old Poison Devil, I'll turn half of your roasted ribs into raw ribs. As for the other half, I'll wait for you to concoct the antidote before discussing it further."

"Then hurry up."

A gentle white light surrounded the Old Poison Devil's body. In a just a short moment of time, his condition improved by a half. He wobbly stood up.

Chen Nan said, "Senior, I'll open the gate for you. Be careful."

"No, I can't leave through the gate, that way is too slow. If we delay even a moment, that damn old woman will breathe her last breath. Help me climb the wall; I'll go back that way instead."

Chen Nan quickly ran over to him and helped him climb up onto the wall. After that, he feigned weakness in martial arts and also climbed up. When he reached the top of the wall, he looked down and almost fainted.

The old man had dug ten or so holes of all sizes into the ground of his courtyard. A hole for centipedes, a hole for scorpions, a hole for toads, a hole for vipers... Every hole was densely packed full of wiggling and squirming action. Furthermore, there wasn't a hole without an assortment of medicinal herbs growing in it. A few relatively distinctive snakes and other similar creatures slithered around those medicinal herbs. For example, a golden centipede over one chi long, a python with brocade scales and the girth of a bucket...

The old man said, "Little brother, go down first so you can catch me."

"No no no..." Chen Nan shook his head like a rattle-drum. Even if he were threatened with death, he wouldn't go down there.

In the end, Chen Nan used both of his hands to grip the old man's wrist to lower him down.

A dark green spider the size of a hand suddenly appeared on top of the wall. With just a glance, it was obvious that it was a highly toxic creature. Chen Nan instantly tensed up and relaxed his hands. The old man fell down with a plop.

"Ah~! Damn..." The old man cried out repeatedly.

Chen Nan nervously asked, "Senior, are you okay?"

"Damn... damn..."

"What happened? Where did you fall?"

Underneath the old man's body was an exuberant patch of medicinal herbs. After getting off the medicinal herbs, a toad the size of a millstone could be seen.

"Crap... my Xiao Lu has been squished dizzy."

"Fainting! It's the toad that he loves so dearly!" Chen Nan leapt from on top of the wall back into his own courtyard.

"That's seriously dreadful. Holy fuck... A toad can actually be as large as a fat pig."

After about the time it takes to drink half a cup of tea, the Old Poison Devil threw over the wall a porcelain bottle the size of a hand. "Get the stuff inside and pour it into that damned great-grandmother's mouth."

After Chen Nan took off the cork, he almost lost consciousness. Its smell was unbearably foul. He seriously doubted that it was the antidote. Even if it was, it most likely had some of that old fellow's own 'seasoning' mixed in with it.

After pouring the fishy and foul liquid medicine into the Old Witch's mouth, the Old Witch's eyes rolled and she sat up. But she threw up right

after.

"Ou... God dammit, what the hell did that damn old guy give me to drink?"

Just then, the Old Poison Devil pushed open Chen Nan's courtyard gate and hobbled inside.

The Old Witch promptly rose into the air. She also put up her magical protective screen.

"Old Poison Devil, you actually gave such foul-smelling medicine for me to drink, yet you still dare to drop in for a visit, gaga~!" The Old Witch's fingers crackled and rattled. Electric sparks began flashing about.

The Old Poison Devil was so scared he was trembling. Now that the Old Witch's entire body was protected behind her magical screen, his poison techniques were simply useless.

"Hey, damn old woman, be reasonable. Don't you know that good medicine tastes bitter and is beneficial for your ailments? Naturally that antidote was the real deal."

"Utter rubbish. Do antidotes have that kind of fishy smell? Ou..." When she arrived at that point, the Old Witch threw up again. Meanwhile, a fine streak of lightning struck the Old Poison Devil.

The old fellow's white hair again stood erect like a lion's mane. With much difficulty, he could still stand on his two feet, but all four of his

limbs were twitching.

"Damn old woman, you're capricious. Like a savage that doesn't know an ounce of reason. You went back on your word. I saved you properly, yet you're returning kindness with hatred."

"Gaga~! If you hadn't launched a sneak attack on me first, then how could I have gotten poisoned? You're guilty and deserve to be punished."

"Nonsense. Even if I didn't attack first, you still would have used your magic against me. I merely struck first to gain the upper hand."

...

The two of them continued to argue like this, but the Old Poison Devil was clearly lacking in confidence. He knew that under normal circumstances, he'd be unable to compete with that Old Witch under any conditions.

At the side, Chen Nan couldn't watch this continue. He opened his mouth and said, "This... Two seniors, I feel that harmony is most precious. You need not injure the peace."

The Old Poison Devil said, "I don't care. So long as the burns on my body get healed, everything will be fine."

Chen Nan also said, "Senior, you had better quickly heal this uncle's injuries. Otherwise, others will start to think that we're having a barbecue in the yard."

"Gaga~!" the Old Witch gave a hearty cackle. "Alright, seeing your expression, I'll pardon him this once. Right, boy, what's your name?"

"Junior is called Chen Nan."

"Gaga~! I'll bear that in mind."

Soon after, the Old Witch read aloud a long incantation. A holy radiance accumulated on the Old Poison Devil's body. His flesh that was severely cauterized gradually recovered its vitality. When the light dissipated, the old fellow had recovered his appearance of a lively dragon or an energetic tiger. There was not a trace of dispiritedness on his face.

Chen Nan secretly praised, "Magic really does have its own merits."

After using the advanced recovery spell, a hint of exhaustion appeared on the Old Witch's face. She said to Chen Nan, "Boy, you aren't too bad. If you ever find yourself being bullied, you can always come find me. I'll help you vent your anger." With that said, she shot a ferocious glance at the Old Poison Devil.

The Old Poison Devil also chimed in, "Lad, I also think you're not bad. Feel at ease. With me here, no one will dare bully you. Even if that bastard is powerful, doesn't he still need to eat and drink? Heihei, I don't believe that he can avoid my poison every time." With that said, the old fellow also shot a glance back at the Old Witch.

"Hmph!"

The Old Witch gave a cold hump and then flew away.

Chen Nan said, "The courtyard of this senior who researches magic has already been obliterated, she probably won't continue living here."

The Old Poison Devil explained, "Of course. This damn old woman likes to live it up, how could she still stay here?"

Chen Nan was simply ecstatic. The Old Witch's frightening destructive power was to be kept far away from him. If this Old Poison Devil were to also leave, then his personal safety would be even more ensured.

"Wo, where did that senior run off to?"

"Into your backyard."

"Putong!"

"Ai, youngster, why are you sitting on the ground for no reason?"

...

"Uncle, your snakes and bugs won't crawl over to my courtyard, right?"

"Generally, no."

Chen Nan modestly asked, "What do you mean generally...?"

The Old Poison Devil earnestly thought for a moment and then said, "En! If there isn't too much noise, my darlings won't run around everywhere. Generally speaking, as long as that damn old woman stops her magical research, then it's alright."

"Then how often does she conduct her magical research?"

"More or less once a day."

"Putong!"

"Ai! Youngster, are you sure you're not feeling unwell? Why are you on the ground again? Let me see whether or not I need to bring you some elixirs. En, Decaying Corpse Poison, Red-Crowned Crane Skull Extract, Heartbroken Grass... Aiyah, these won't do. Oh well, I still have Bone Transforming Pellets, Seven Step Soul Breaking Powder..."

"Sou!"

In the blink of an eye, Chen Nan vanished from the courtyard back into his house.

"Young people these days really don't have any patience. I'm sure there's some kind of medicine that's suited for you. If not, I'll go look for some for you next time." The Old Poison Devil leapt over the wall back into his own yard.

Chen Nan sighed. "No wonder this place is called the Residence of Eccentrics. The two people that I just met are simply 'strange' to an extreme point."

After five days of living in the Residence of Eccentrics, a young lady came to pay him a visit. Although this woman didn't have the devastating beauty of Chu Yue, she was still exceptionally attractive. She emanated a faint enlightened temperament, giving one a sense of tranquility.

"Hello, Young Master Chen."

"Hello. You are...?"

"I'm called Nalan Ruoshui. I'm also a member of the Residence of Eccentrics."

"Hello Nalan-xiaojie. Thanks for visiting, please, come inside."

After arriving inside the house, Nalan Ruoshui said, "I've heard the eldest princess say your power had been exhausted and has disappeared. I've somewhat studied the art of healing. I wish to try my hand in this aspect and see whether or not I can restore your power."

Chen Nan was completely startled. He didn't think the pretty girl before him was actually a national medical expert. He was under the impression that all famous doctors were old men with white hair and beards, yet the girl in front of him was so youthful.

"You want to help me restore my power?"

Nalan Ruoshui was extraordinarily serene. "Yes, that's right."

"But my power has already been crippled by someone; there really aren't any medical techniques that can resolve it."

"I can give it a try. By way of acupuncture and moxibustion, I'll excite your whole body's acupoints and rouse your body's hidden capability. According to the theory, it may help you recover your power."

Chen Nan decided to keep the fact that his power was already restored a secret after all. He smiled. "Then I'll have to thank you, Nalan-xiaojie."

Nalan Ruoshui indifferently replied, "Don't mention it."

From her sleeve, she drew out a small jade case. Inside it was filled with acupuncture needles. The jade case and the acupuncture needles shone brilliantly as one.

"Young Master Chen, please take off your outer clothing."

Following her order, Chen Nan threw off his spacious outer clothing, exposing his skin-tight inner clothes.

"Please take off all the clothes above your waistline."

"This..." An exceptionally beautiful woman was looking at him as if he were goods, giving him a sense of embarrassment. But nevertheless, he followed her orders and removed the clothes on his upper body.

With the jade case in her hands, Nalan Ruoshui softly walked over to him. A faint, delicate fragrance wafted to Chen Nan's nostrils causing his heart to stir.

"Has Young Master Chen felt anything unwell in his body for the past several days?"

"Other than losing my power, I haven't felt anything amiss."

"Oh, well that's good."

Sensing the intoxicating, delicate fragrance almost within reach, Chen Nan was enchanted. Nalan Ruoshui seemed to notice the peculiar look in his eyes. With her slender jade fingers, she nipped an acupuncture needle and quickly stuck it into a major acupoint on his chest.

"Ah~!" Chen Nan miserably shrieked.

Nalan Ruoshui's expression remained undisturbed, as if nothing had happened. She took out a second acupuncture needle and quickly and accurately inserted it into another major acupoint.

Chen Nan gave out another miserable scream. He muttered in his heart, "Acupuncture and moxibustion shouldn't be very painful. Could she be deliberately using more power than necessary?"

As expected, the third needle and after weren't nearly as painful as the first two.

Chen Nan said to himself, "This beautiful doctor's temper is really great!"

In a short period of time, Chen Nan's upper body was completely covered in acupuncture needles. At the moment, the vital qi within his body was beginning to stir, but he forcefully dispelled it within his meridian channels.

Nalan Ruoshui spread her slender jade fingers and began massaging the areas around where the needles were inserted. Bursts of heat came from her fingers and transmitted into Chen Nan's body.

Chen Nan discovered that Nalan Ruoshui actually possessed some of her own authentic power. The vital qi that was being released from her fingers unceasingly excited his acupoints, causing him to sense the vital qi that was resting within his body to once again become lively.

"Meditate! Meditate!" he continuously reminded himself. Once again, his excited vital qi calmed.

In this way, the treatment lasted an hour. Chen Nan was already covered in profuse sweat. Nalan Ruoshui's face was also scarlet. Her breathing was slightly staggered.

Seeing the lithe body with curves up and down in front of him, Chen

Nan's mind filled with those sorts of thoughts. A scowl flashed through her eyes in reply. She indifferently said, "Young Master Chen, if you want to recover your power, then please immediately begin meditating. Work your former cultivation technique."

Chen Nan shut his eyes and slowly regulated his vital qi, willing it to slowly move. He already felt that, after undergoing the acupuncture and moxibustion, all the acupoints along his meridian channels were incomparably comfortable and unrestrained. He naturally wouldn't give up this opportunity to cultivate his ancestral profound skill, but he could only slowly move his vital qi. He didn't dare to cause any large motions. Otherwise, Nalan Ruoshui would be able to detect it.

After an hour of slowly circulating it, he sensed that his vital qi had strengthened a bit. His power had somewhat progressed. When he opened his eyes, he found Nalan Ruoshui undisturbed, watching him attentively.

"How is it? Do you feel vital qi circulating within your meridian channels?"

"I don't."

"Not even a bit?"

Chen Nan shook his head.

Nalan Ruoshui thought for a moment. "This... En, we probably wasted a little too much time. Oh well, we'll continue tomorrow. I believe that after

being treated in this way for a while, your power will be restored."

"Then many thanks, Nalan-xiaojie."

Nalan Ruoshui plucked each and every one of the acupuncture needles out of his body, returning them to the jade case.

Watching her beautiful figure gradually fade into the distance, Chen Nan returned to his courtyard.

Although Nalan Ruoshui was an absolutely beautiful woman, she had an indifferent, enlightened temperament. That sort of still, enlightened temperament enticed others.

Chen Nan said to himself, "A beautiful doctor, indifferent and enlightened. To already become an eccentric in the field of medicine this young, she's seriously a genius!"

"Boy, what are you wantonly smiling about?" The Old Poison Devil's white head poked out from behind the wall. On his shoulders was a big dark green spider.

"Nothing..."

"You still tell me nothing? You were already drooling."

"Fainting to the floor!" Chen Nan was helpless.

"What did I see wrong? Tell me the truth. Did you make up some naughty plan to get with some young lady?" The Old Poison Devil had the look of a shameless elder.

"Uncle, were you there peeping the whole time?"

"What peeping? I was just kind of curious, that's all. I wasn't careful and overheard you, and watched."

"You weren't careful?" Chen Nan was speechless.

"Yes. Right. boy, how did you lose your power? Also, what is it that you can do? Why are you staying in the Residence of Eccentrics?"

"Well..."

The Old Poison Devil said, "Don't worry, there are no secrets among the eccentrics of the Residence of Eccentrics. Otherwise, the head princess wouldn't feel at ease to have you stay here. Each and every person here has vowed loyalty and devotion to the Empire of Chu. No one here will expose the secrets regarding this place."

Chen Nan thought for a moment. It did seem to be like this. He truthfully replied, "I can draw back Houyi Bow."

"What?! Aiyah!" The Old Poison Devil was so alarmed that he fell off the wall, but in a second, he again emerged in Chen Nan's courtyard.

"I didn't mishear, right? You can draw back the sealed Houyi Bow? Holy shit. No wonder you can live here while you're still so young. You're seriously a national treasure!" The old man made a big fuss in admiration.

Seeing the Old Poison Devil jumping about, Chen Nan didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

After a while, the old fellow calmed down and asked, "Boy, how did you lose your power?"

"This is a long story. If I have the time, I'll tell you."

"It doesn't matter, just tell me it briefly. I really want to know." The Old Poison Devil looked like a curious baby.

"In simple terms... En, well... A demon crippled it."

The Old Poison Devil asked, "That's it?"

Chen Nan said, "That's it."

"Isn't—isn't this too simple?"

"Well you wanted it to be simple."

The Old Poison Devil said, "Well then tell me what happened in

complicated terms."

"..."

At that moment, the sound of a huge explosion erupted from behind Chen Nan's courtyard. The Old Poison Devil screamed, "Fuck, that destructive bitch... My darlings were definitely startled by that." With that said, he hastily leapt back into his own yard.

Chen Nan let out a breath of air. After returning to his house, he immediately sat down to meditate. All the vital qi within his body began frantically bubbling and surging about. Dazzling golden light suffused in abundance from his body. His entire body was enveloped by the golden radiance.

After about an hour, the golden light around Chen Nan's body finally began to disperse, fading from his body's surface. He suddenly jumped up. The vital qi in his body was turbulently surging. Facing upwards, he let out a long hiss.

Nalan Ruoshui's medical expertise was truly excellent. After undergoing her acupuncture and moxibustion, in addition to that frantic urge to circulate the vital qi within his body, at present, his state of mind was cool and relaxed. His power had once again made great progress.

He suppressed the urge to hiss at the sky and ran out into his courtyard, where he delivered a fist to the ground.

"Honglonglong!"

The entire yard immediately shook. The bamboo forest in his yard was wildly swaying, covering the ground with foliage. With him at the center, an enormous crack appeared on the ground.

The Old Poison Devil next door was heard yelling, "God damn! That damn old woman still hasn't finished her shit! Next time, I'll definitely poison her so that she's stuck in bed for at least three months. Xiao Bai, don't run..."

Chen Nan's hands emanated resplendent sword qi. The golden cutting edge of his strike had struck the dust and sand on the ground into the air. Shortly, the fissure in the ground was filled in again by the sand. He was exceptionally excited. His ancestral profound skill finally broke through the confines of the second Chongtian. He finally stepped into the third Chongtian. The heroic feeling of ten thousand zhang swelled in his heart.

[T/N: 萬丈豪情/heroic feeling of ten thousand zhang; meaning something like 'boundless, grand heroism'.]

## Volume 2 Chapter 3: Ancient Imperial Texts

The next day when Nalan Ruoshui saw Chen Nan again, she was positively astonished. She was shocked to discover that the man standing in front of her had seemingly transformed into a whole new person. Although Chen Nan's appearance was still as ordinary as always, the faint smile on his face, the deep look in his eyes... it really seemed like he had a newfound, indescribable temperament.

"Did you recover your power?"

"Nope. Why do you ask?"

Nalan Ruoshui said, "I feel that something has happened in your body. Your body seems to have gained some of that kind of temperament. Isn't it because you recovered your power?"

Chen Nan was alarmed. He quickly suppressed his power. He laughed, "How could that be?"

Nalan Ruoshui resumed her undisturbed look. "I probably made a mistake. Alright, I'll continue with the acupuncture and moxibustion."

This time, the acupuncture and moxibustion continued for two hours. After Nalan Ruoshui departed, Chen Nan hurriedly forcibly circulated his vital qi throughout all his vessels, but the result wasn't nearly as great as the first time.

He opened his two eyes and let out a breath of air. "It seems there truly are no shortcuts when cultivating martial arts!"

From then on, Nalan Ruoshui visited nearly every day, but not every treatment was acupuncture and moxibustion. Sometimes, she would beat the acupoints all over Chen Nan's body, hoping to reactivate his inner vital qi. Slowly, the two of them gradually became friendly with each other. Nalan Ruoshui was no longer as cold and indifferent as before. Occasionally, the two of them would chat more than just a few sentences.

From those conversations, Chen Nan deduced that although Nalan Ruoshui was a member of the Residence of Eccentrics, she rarely lived there. Normally, she lived at home with her family. Her father was an official of the court. Furthermore, his post couldn't be considered as too low. She and Chu Yue had been friends playing together since childhood. As a result, she could regularly go to and from the Imperial Library's room of ancient texts. The majority of her medical expertise had been learned from there.

When Chen Nan heard Nalan Ruoshui mention the ancient imperial texts, a light flashed through his two eyes. He knew that place would certainly hold some precious ancient books. Maybe there were some written accounts from ten thousand years ago. Thinking of this, he became ecstatic.

"Nalan-xiaojie, you can truly be regarded as a genius. Over half of your brilliant medical expertise was gleaned from your own studying. It's truly admirable."

Nalan Ruoshui indifferently said, "Actually, it wasn't much. All you need is to work hard and put in some effort. Anyone could accomplish the

same."

Chen Nan sighed. "It'd be impossible for me. I'm a person of the mountains and fields. I don't even have knowledge of writing. How could I learn those things from books?"

Nalan Ruoshui was startled. "Y-you're illiterate?"

"Yep. I don't know a single character. I don't even know how to write my own name." When Chen Nan said this, the look on his face turned somewhat desolate. Although it was a lie, there was still some of his true feelings hidden within it.

"I'm an orphan who was abandoned deep in the mountains. A kind old hunter took me in and adopted me. Due to being strained for money all my life, I never went to school to learn how to read and write. When I was sixteen years old, my foster father left me. From then on, the sky was drab..."

"Aside from bringing me up, foster father gave me the warmth of family, and he taught me some martial skills. But how much strength could a sixteen year old kid have had? Each time I went to go hunting deep in the mountains, I would find myself under the claws of beasts and run away panicking... The winter snow drowned my knees, but I didn't have any shoes to wear. I could only wear my flimsy clothes and hide away in my simple and crude little hut that was devastated by the icy winds, trembling..."

"No warmth, no food... I could only beg Heaven to put an end to the wind and the snow earlier... During the endless winter, sometimes I could

only eat once every six or seven days. Even then, it was only because of the kindness of my neighbours who took out rations from their own supplies to give to me in charity...

"Starving and freezing, I fell ill. One day, my neighbours noticed that they hadn't seen me in a while, so they barged into the crude hut that my foster father had left behind. At that time, I was already in a coma for many days. According to the neighbours, I was constantly crying out: 'Mama... Mama...', but I know that in this life, I don't have a mother. I only previously had a foster father..."

Chen Nan wiped the tears off his face. "Sorry, Nalan-xiaojie, I've wasted your time. I'm too emotional; I let it all out all at once..."

A watery mist clung to Nalan Ruoshui's eyes. Her voice was gentle. "It is I who should be apologizing. It was I who made you recall your painful past. Sorry, I didn't know you had such a harsh past."

"It's nothing. The suffering in my past has only made me cherish the happiness I have in the present even more."

Women are naturally kind-hearted. Chen Nan's 'tragic past' made Nalan Ruoshui's heart fill with pain. She gently said, "Young Master Chen, do you wish to learn how to read and write? I can teach you."

"Truly?" Chen Nan, delighted, looked at her. This was what he was waiting for, but in his heart, he felt more or less ashamed. He had used a lie to gain sympathy.

"Of course it's true. From now on, in the morning, I'll treat you with acupuncture and moxibustion; in the afternoon, I'll teach you how to read and write." Currently, Nalan Ruoshui's face no longer had her customary indifference, that coldness and detachedness. In its place, there was a flowery smile.

Chen Nan didn't expect this girl, who had been outwardly cold, detached, and had a faint enlightened temperament, to surprisingly have this kind of charming smile.

Women are naturally kind-hearted, full of sympathy. Nalan Ruoshui was moved by Chen Nan's 'sorrowful childhood'. In the following days, she changed from her previous indifference. She carefully treated him with acupuncture and moxibustion and thought of all kinds of ways to try and restore his power. At the same time, she put her heart into teaching him how to read and write.

Shame took root in Chen Nan's heart. He held great esteem and respect for this beautiful girl.

After half a month, Chen Nan's 'illness' still hadn't improved. This left Nalan Ruoshui flabbergasted. She rummaged through all kinds of medicinal records and texts, but remained helpless in the face of crisis.

In this period of time, Chu Yue visited a few times. Every time, she would console Chen Nan and tell him not to feel anxious.

The little princess also covertly came to visit a few times. Naturally, she deliberately made things difficult for Chen Nan every visit. Perhaps she felt a bit ashamed, but she was never too excessive. Despite this, the little

demon still gave Chen Nan a headache. However, Chen Nan was baffled at the way she surreptitiously came and went. Later, he heard from Nalan Ruoshui why it was like so. As it turned out, the little demon was hiding from that magic researcher, the Old Witch.

The Old Witch once wanted to accept the princess as her disciple, but no matter what, the princess was unwilling. Instead, she actually paid respects to the martial master Zhuge Chengfeng as her teacher. Because of this, the Old Witch grew resentful. She almost went to find Zhuge Chengfeng to have a duel. Regardless, she never abandoned the idea of taking the princess as her disciple. Every time she saw her, she'd 'use emotion to arouse her heart and use reason to provoke her mind'. The princess was afraid of her. Every time she'd visit the Residence of Eccentrics, it would always be a covert operation.

After hearing Nalan Ruoshui's explanation, Chen Nan laughed wildly. He never expected that little witch of endless evil to be so vehemently scared and yielding. It was simply a fantastic story.

The trace of a faint smile emerged at the corner of Nalan Ruoshui's mouth. To be able to make this kind of indifferent girl to smile, one could imagine the little demon definitely had a 'nasty name that spread far and wide' in the imperial capital.

One day, the princess's teacher Zhuge Chengfeng suddenly returned, seriously injured. The community of xiulianists in the imperial capital was in an uproar. Chen Nan was also aghast. He had personally witnessed the skill of this grandmaster level martial artist. His cultivation neared Dao. To this day, the great battle between Zhuge Chengfeng and the Monolithic Snake was still fresh in his memory.

Zhuge Chengfeng had indeed seen the legendary qilin. Countless xiulianists had frantically rushed towards the qilin. Everyone wanted to tame the mythological beast. Even ones who had no hope in succeeding had stepped forward one after another, hoping to push the wave and bolster the ripples in the effort to kill it and thereby obtain a scale and half a claw to refine into medicine.

[T/N: 推波助瀾/push the wave and bolster the ripples; meaning 'add momentum'; 一鱗半爪/a scale and half a claw; meaning 'only some pieces'.]

Zhuge Chengfeng had had a detached point of view. He had been fully aware of the strength of mythological creatures. Only unordinary people may have the capability to deal with one. A Holy Snake that had failed in its draconic transformation had already made him pull on his lapels, exposing his elbows, let alone legendary mythological beasts. As he anticipated, the qilin had hardly been in a panic at being besieged from all sides by several hundred people. It had opened its mouth and breathed out a vast flame. The temperature of the flame had been dreadfully high. The first people who had rushed towards it were burnt into ashes that flew away and smoke that instantly dispersed.

[T/N: 捉襟見肘/pull on the lapels, exposing the elbows; meaning 'unable to deal with it'.]

Zhuge Chengfeng had originally wanted to leave after that, but the qilin, against all expectations, had fixed its gaze on him. The mythological beast was capable of identifying the most powerful individuals out of a crowd. Its mind had been filled with deep hostility towards the intruders who had forcefully burst into its ancient cave and roused it from its slumber. Leaving a trail of fire, it had immediately rushed towards Zhuge Chengfeng.

The great battle between Zhuge Chengfeng and the mythological beast

had been incomparably desperate. Like a pond of fish, countless people who had come for the qilin suffered calamity. Some had been killed by haphazardly soaring sword qi that pierced their bodies in the struggle. Others had been burnt to ashes by the turbulent, raging flames. Countless people died violent deaths. Ultimately, Zhuge Chengfeng proved no match for the qilin and was seriously injured, but he had been able to escape from the incredibly dangerous Luofeng Mountain Range.

There was no more than one or two per ten people who successfully escaped from the danger. This matter gave rise to a tempest in the continent. Even more xiulianists with profound cultivation burst into the Luofeng Mountain Range, wishing to tame the qilin as their mount. In particular were those dragon riders from the western continent. After hearing this news, their interest in the qilin completely eclipsed their interest in Monolithic Dragons. Ten incredibly formidable dragon riders all went off on a journey from their home countries, rushing towards this Luofeng Mountain Range.

Zhuge Chengfeng only briefly discussed this matter, but one could already imagine the danger. The battlefield had been undeniably many times more intense than that involving the Monolithic Snake.

After hearing this, the princess was extremely resentful. She pouted her lips, mumbling, "This is such a great show, but I never got a chance to see it. I really regret not being able to watch it. Old fogey is seldom made a fool of; I never expected to be able to see him in such a bad state with my own two eyes, ai..."

After Zhuge Chengfeng returned and explained what had happened, he hurriedly left to a secret place to heal. If he were to hear the complaints spouted by his treasured disciple, he'd definitely be so angry he'd vomit blood.

Afterwards, the matter involving the qilin boiled for over a month. Innumerable xiulianists returned with crippled feathers until the qilin disappeared into the Luofeng Mountain Range. This matter finally came to an end.

[T/N: 鐮羽而歸/return with crippled feathers; meaning 'return with low morale after defeat/failure'.]

Since the time Chen Nan's ancestral profound skill had entered the third Chongtian, he could've easily left at any time, but he wasn't in a hurry. Every day, other than receiving 'treatment', he'd focus all his concentration and effort in studying the continent's common script.

Time passed quickly. In the blink of an eye, two months passed. Still, there was not even the slightest bit of an indication that his power 'recovered'. But regarding the modern script of the continent, he already grasped it very well. This left Nalan Ruoshui amazed. She never thought he'd be so talented in the aspect of reading and writing.

Chen Nan madly read all kinds of history books: true history, unofficial history... it was all overturned by him.

Whenever he thought of Shenmo Cemetery, his heart would pound. He had come back to life from that ancient graveyard, so he was particularly interested in its past. He was dying to learn of all its secrets. Chen Nan had an unusual, intense feeling that the alarming, gargantuan secret from ten thousand years ago wasn't completely erased from history. Sooner or later, there would come a day when the water subsides, exposing the rocks.

[T/N: 水落石出/water subsides, exposing the rocks; meaning 'the truth is revealed'.]

He vainly scoured through history books looking for spider's thread and horse tracks from ten thousand years ago, but he was disappointed. All the history data only covered up to the major events that had occurred in the past five thousand years. There was simply no information dating from ten thousand years ago.

[T/N: 蛛絲馬跡/spider's thread and horse tracks; meaning 'hints/traces'.]

Nalan Ruoshui was surprised at his interest in history. She couldn't help but inquire, "Young Master Chen, why do you have such a passion for history? The Residence of Eccentrics has all sorts of poems and ballads, how come I've never seen you look at those?"

Chen Nan laughed, embarrassed. "This... Although poems and ballads are much more creative and artistic and rouse people's sentiments, I find that history has even more emotion. It leaves one quivering in their thoughts. Before, I was illiterate, so I never read a book and never knew that the continent has such a turbulent and magnificent past. A strong empire rises up and then perishes; an outstanding nation is prosperous then declines... The wind and rain from five thousand years ago, the dazzling glory from five thousand years ago... it can deeply move someone—blow their mind!"

A hint of a peculiar expression flashed through Nalan Ruoshui's eyes. She smiled. "Young Master Chen, you've been moved so deeply, it seems like your gains are not few!"

Chen Nan felt ashamed. He didn't think his crazy nonsense would make it seem like he'd been so deeply moved.

"You've only learned to read just two months ago, yet you're already capable of reading through the continent's history. It's really admirable!" Nalan Ruoshui praised. A smile was suspended on her face.

Chen Nan saw that Nalan Ruoshui's current mood was pretty good. He decided to put into action the plan that he formulated a while ago. "Nalan-xiaojie, I've read all the history books in the Residence of Eccentrics. Perhaps the two of us go to the Imperial Library's room of ancient texts and browse through it together?"

Nalan Ruoshui looked at him, taken aback. "Are you truly that interested in history? The Imperial Library's room of ancient texts is looked after very closely. Only by relying on my status as Chu Yue's close friend can I go in. If I were to bring someone else, I'm afraid it'd be very difficult. But we can give it a try. If we can get Princess Yu to accompany us, then the possibility of you entering may go up a bit."

With the topic of the little demon raised, Chen Nan's head began to ache. He promptly shook his head. "That's okay then, I'll continue to stay in the Residence of Eccentrics and read some of the poems and ballads."

"It doesn't matter. Tomorrow, I'll go look for Princess Yu."

"No no... I seriously can't go. If I read that much history, I'll get a headache."

"Hehe..." Although Nalan Ruoshui was ordinarily as cold as ice and rarely displayed her smile, her current flowery smile was particularly touching. It was like a ripple of spring water, rippling into one's heart.

Chen Nan became despondent. Nalan Ruoshui's following words struck him back into reality.

"Don't worry. I definitely won't go find Princess Yu to accompany us. I need to find her to find Her Highness Princess Yue. Princess Yu is famous for being troublesome, why would I randomly want to cause trouble for myself."

Chen Nan forced a laugh. "I didn't think Her Highness the princess's reputation was so great. I thought only I regarded her as a headache."

Later that evening, Chen Nan was lying in bed recalling his experiences from the past two months, all the drama that had played out. He unexpectedly became a secret state official for the Empire of Chu. The greatest benefit he had gained in the past two months was fluency in the continent's modern script. He had completely assimilated into society.

The next day, there was the trace of a smile on Nalan Ruoshui's face. She said to Chen Nan, "Princess Yue has already informed the management of the Imperial Library. In a while, after your acupuncture and moxibustion, you can come with me together for a visit."

Chen Nan was delighted at the unexpected good news. After the acupuncture and moxibustion, he followed Nalan Ruoshui out of the Residence of Eccentrics. Ten or so warriors were protecting a luxurious carriage nearby. Nalan Ruoshui told him to get into the carriage with her, and Chen Nan thanked her. Throughout the whole journey, he could smell her intoxicating, delicate fragrance. They quickly arrived at the Imperial City.

The restricted land of the imperial palace; a civil official descends from his palanquin; the military officials dismount from their horses; other than the imperial family, no one else was able to enjoy this spectacular, luxurious treatment. Within the imperial palace, the halls were lofty and high, heights uneven. A majestic scene. Chen Nan followed Nalan Ruoshui to the Imperial Library, a left turn here, a right turn there, until they arrived outside a grand hall.

The person in charge here was an imperial secretary of about forty years of age. Thanks to Chu Yue's prior message, he didn't say much.

Within the hall, the ancient records were like mountains, beautifully chaotic. Every row and every column was stacked neatly and tidily.

Within this ocean of books, Chen Nan passed over the poetry, passed over the astrology books, passed over the medicinal books... He arrived directly at the door of a storeroom with a labelled sign: History. Peering inside, there appeared to be close to ten thousand books. He grew dizzy. With this many books, it would take him how many years and how many months to be able to read all of them. This was just too many.

He patiently went searching in the ocean of books. He only scanned the first page of every book. If its contents were from within the past five thousand years, then he'd uniformly 'return it home'.

In the following days, Chen Nan and Nalan Ruoshui would go to and from the Residence of Eccentrics and the room of ancient texts at the Imperial Library every day. He uninterestingly browsed through history books daily.

One day, Chen Nan extracted a book from the bookshelf in passing. He opened it up and saw that the calligraphy was modern. He thought for a moment, and then went to return it to its original position. But the four words of the cover, 'The Ranks of Xiulianists', roused his interest. As he was in the middle of pushing it back into its place on the shelf, he took it back out.

He flipped open the book, hoping to skim over it once, but he shortly found that it piqued his interest. This book pertained to the ranks of xiulianists and how their strengths were divided. Xiudaoists, magi, eastern martial artists, and western martial artists all had their own standards in regards to dividing their strength. But in order to compare their levels of strength, no matter how weak or great, they were all divided into five ranks. However, the lowest rank described was still an expert of experts. People who were able to ascend to one of these ranks were truly of a class of tyrannical strength. Ordinary experts were simply not included within the scope of this book.

After reading through the book's introduction, he definitely understood the profound strengths of the xiulianists on the present day continent.

Xiudaoists were the most mysterious. Because they very rarely took action, there was some controversy within the outside world regarding the divisions of strength among them. Their level of cultivation was simply divided like so: Zhuji, Yangqi, Ninghua, Jiedan, and Yuanying. However, the book also explained that there may also be an even higher level above these. The highest level of legends led directly to the realm of immortals. This was nothing more than conjecture; no one had ever seen these kinds of people in action.

The strength of magi could be divided like so: Amateur Magus, Intermediate Magus, High Magus, Grand Magus, and Magic Daoshi.

Eastern martial artists' levels of cultivation could be divided like so: Refining Essence into Qi, Innate Condition, Sword Qi Beyond the Body, Refining Qi into Spirit, and Concentration of Spirit and Consolidation of Qi. Additionally, the book also mentioned that there has been someone who had surpassed these five levels. Their body's unrivalled power was unfathomable by others. They could even be said to be a god.

The strength of western martial artists could be divided like so: Sword Craftsman, Sword Expert, Sword Adept, Sword Saint, and Sword God. Aside from these, western martial artists also possessed the classification of a unique xiulianist—dragon riders. These tyrannical practitioners and their awe-inspiring dragons were bound together. They possessed their own stifling, terrible, destructive strength that could be divided like so: Land Dragon Riders, Flying Dragon Riders, Auxiliary Dragon Riders, Monolithic Dragon Riders, and Holy Dragon Riders.

The distinct classes of xiulianists were all divided into five ranks. In this way, their strengths could be compared with one another. Generally speaking, there wasn't much of a difference between the strengths of equivalent ranks. However, xiudaoists and magi clearly dominated over martial artists. When their opponent was weaker than they were and was lower ranked, then they'd be able to exhibit their unique strengths to directly manipulate the world's original vital qi, to conduct large-scale attacks, or to indiscriminately attack many different opponents simultaneously.

If it was according to what the book states in the way it divides up the levels of strength into ranks, then the majority of martial artists were still blocked off from the ranks of experts. Although martial skills could be

cultivated by anyone, the overwhelming majority of practitioners did not have a very profound level of cultivation. Only a small number of talents were capable of becoming a ranked expert.

Although the required constitution for xiudaoists and magi was comparatively high, it meant that the number of practitioners was very low, but the great majority of these practitioners were ranked experts. It was obvious that a xiulianist's constitution and their future accomplishments were heavily related. Overall, there was little difference between the numbers of ranked experts of the four kinds of xiulianists.

Chen Nan closed the book and let out a long breath. He finally figured out the ranking of the strength of modern xiulianists. But he was sure that the highest level of xiulianists was definitely not limited to these five ranks. According to his limited knowledge, that year, his father Chen Zhan's cultivation had already surpassed Soul Condenses Qi into Substance, the fifth rank of eastern martial artists.

He objectively estimated the rank of his own strength. His ancestral profound skill had already reached the third Chongtian. He should just be capable of sending his sword qi out of his body. It was just enough for him to be considered a xiulianist of the third rank. According to the continent, he was already a genuine expert.

To be able to accidentally discover this book, Chen Nan felt that he had benefited not lightly.

In the next several days, he became familiar with a strange, old man in the book room. The old man was abnormally old. His two eyes were turbid and lacked liveliness. His teeth had lost their glow long ago. His skin was as wrinkled as a crumpled up ball of paper. His glowing bald

head had few sparse hairs—only ten or so.

When Chen Nan had first seen the old man, he had jumped back in fright. He had even thought he was a departed ghost that had suddenly escaped from his coffin and was looking for vengeance. In order to be polite, every time he'd see the old man, he'd smile at him in greeting, but they had yet to speak a word to each other.

One day, Chen Nan was just browsing through some dusty, old, history books when the old man's voice suddenly sounded from behind him: "Youngster, do you like history?"

Chen Nan was so startled he almost jumped. The strange old man resembled a specter, soundlessly arriving not even one chi behind him. He secretly blamed it on how engrossed he was in the books.

"Ah, yes. I prefer it, but it seems like there aren't many ancient works here. The earliest they date back to is only five thousand years."

"Oh, you like reading ancient books? Can you understand the writing?"

"En, I have some academic achievements in ancient writing. I can read most of the ancient text." He raised the book in his hand and said, "Look, this is the writing from four thousand years ago. Although it's more complicated compared to modern writing, I can still figure it out." Chen Nan absolutely did not lie. He was actually quite sensitive to written languages. Besides, the modern common writing on the continent had originated and evolved from Xianhuan Continent's ancient writing, so it wasn't hard to compare the two. It also wasn't too hard to distinguish the writing in between the two ages.

Chen Nan seemed to be seeing things. It seemed like he saw a trace of a green light flash out of the old man's turbid eyes.

The old man asked, "Why do you like reading ancient books?"

Chen Nan answered, "I'm rather interested in the legends and myths from ancient times and want to learn a thing or two."

The old man laughed out loud. Hearing his laughter, Chen Nan felt that it was remarkably awe-inspiring.

"Youngster, if you are truly capable of understanding ancient writing, I can take you to another room of books. Genuine ancient documents are located only in that room. Those books are much older than the ones here."

Chen Nan was delighted. At the same time, he began to guess the old man's identity. He could already see that the old man was definitely not some ordinary fellow. Otherwise, there's no way he'd be able to take him to another storeroom of books.

Passing through the main hall, the two of them headed towards a back hall. The back hall was especially quiet. Pushing open the big, thick door, row after row of bookshelves presented themselves to Chen Nan's eyes. The bookshelves were filled with various historical books.

After taking his first step into the ancient book room, Chen Nan sensed a trace, subtle difference. It undulated and trickled in fine streams, like a

faint, cool breeze. It was indistinct, elusive.

"Fainting to death! Are the books here turning back into energy or something? How can there be this sort of undulation?" Now that the obstruction within Chen Nan's body was purged and his spiritual awareness had recovered, his awareness of the external world was much keener and sharper than that of ordinary people.

The old man appeared not to feel anything at all. "Look, everything here is ancient books. Most of them are priceless, lone works. If you can read them, this place is undoubtedly a precious deposit of treasure."

"A precious deposit of treasure?" Chen Nan was a little puzzled.

The old man explained, "Many of these books pertain to martial arts, magic, medicine, the art of poison, and so on. Many of them are even describe special skills that had never been passed down. The imperial family sent specialists here to sort, translate, and edit these ancient books, but they could only translate a small portion. I don't know how deep your achievements are in regards to ancient writing, but if you surpass those specialized, graduated scholars..."

Chen Nan didn't wait for him to finish speaking. He penetrated deep into the pile of books.

Day after day, he wandered around the ancient history books. This left Nalan Ruoshui astonished. After she unintentionally discovered that Chen Nan could read the ancient writing, her jaw dropped. When Chen Nan sorted out an ancient record discussing ancient medicine and gave it to Nalan Ruoshui, she was moved and sharply cried out, "My God! ! I'm not

dreaming, am I?" She ecstatically embraced Chen Nan.

Feeling her soft body against him, Chen Nan became enchanted. He returned Nalan Ruoshui's hug, but her delicate, soft body quickly left his embrace. From a distance, she gave him a gentle smile.

From then on, whenever Chen Nan saw Nalan Ruoshui's smile, his heartbeat couldn't help but quicken.

"Should I find another medical book for her today?"

"Boy, what are you so infatuated about? Looking at your immature appearance, it really makes my old self ashamed to be a man with you," The Old Poison Devil timely said. His arms clung to the courtyard's wall. He poked his head up from behind it.

"Damn old man, you were peeping on me again. You're seriously too perverted and disgusting. Watch me go buy a bunch of firecrackers, set them off, and throw them over into your courtyard." As the two of them became more and more familiar with one another, Chen Nan and the Old Poison Devil gradually began cracking jokes. Now whenever they saw each other, they even spoke sarcastically. However, just like before, he didn't dare to joke around with the Old Witch. The Old Witch continuously moved to the east of his courtyard and to behind his courtyard, scaring him senseless.

"You dare! If you light firecrackers, I'll give you Seven Step Heartbreaker, Ten Step Soul Breaker, Thirteen Step Flesh Decomposer, and Fifteen Step Bone Disintegrator!"

"Fuck, you damn old, perverted man." Chen Nan turned cold. He quickly walked out of the Residence of Eccentrics. Today, Nalan Ruoshui wasn't going to help him with acupuncture and moxibustion. She had said she wanted to carefully study the and treat his illness afterwards.

After Chen Nan arrived at the ancient book room, he found that old man already present.

"Youngster, you're not bad. It seems like you actually do have some achievements in ancient writing. You can actually understand that ancient script. Today, my old self has to trouble you with something."

"Oh, old man, please speak. If I'm able to help you, I definitely will."

From his bosom, the old man fished out a yellowing ancient book. He placed it on the table. He fetched a brush and began transcribing it. After a while's worth of time, the entire piece of paper was filled with a copy.

"Here. Can you help me translate the content written on this piece of paper?"

Chen Nan received it and took a look. The writing wasn't very clear or coherent at all. "Old man, this writing doesn't make much sense. Are you sure you didn't copy it incorrectly?"

The old man said, "As long as you translate it accurately, it's alright. You don't have to worry about it making sense. Every day, I'll have you translate three sheets, is that okay?"

"Sure, no problem." Chen Nan inwardly said, "This old guy seriously suspects me. He actually broke up and scattered all the words, yet he is still making me translate it. Why does he need to keep it so secretive? What is this book?"

The favourable opinion of the old man he had held before had now utterly vanished. He knew that the strange, old man had wanted to court his favour all along. His goal had been simply to have him translate this book.

According to Chen Nan's estimations, the writing on the paper seemed to be of a calligraphic style from six or seven thousand years ago. There were very few words, but among them included 'god', 'corpse', and so on, arousing Chen Nan's sensitive vocabulary. This just made him even more curious about the book.

## Volume 2 Chapter 4: Ancient Tomb Below the Imperial Palace

In a flash, another month passed. During that time, Nalan Ruoshui continued to treat Chen Nan's illness, but he didn't 'improve' at all. Chu Yue also visited. She gave Chen Nan a thin booklet. The booklet contained several internal foundation techniques. She had Chen Nan select one to begin cultivating anew. From these actions, it was clear that Chu Yue no longer held any hope whatsoever in regards to Chen Nan recovering his power.

However, Chu Yue was left greatly disappointed. No matter what foundation technique Chen Nan cultivated, there was never any result whatsoever. Not a single thread of vital qi condensed. The head princess felt somewhat anxious. Finally, she brought Houyi Bow with her to the Residence of Eccentrics to have Chen Nan give it a try and see whether or not he could still draw back the bowstring under his circumstances. The result was obvious. Chen Nan put on an act and tried (and failed) to draw it back, before discouragingly saying, "I can't. It won't draw back at all."

Chu Yue furrowed her beautiful forehead. "How can it be like this? It doesn't make any sense. Ruoshui never lies. She said that according to the theory, your power can be recovered. Moreover... cultivating martial arts from anew also doesn't have any effect..."

Chen Nan aptly replied, "I feel that my body has something odd going on, but when I just held Houyi Bow, I felt very unusual. I seemed to sense an indication that my inner vital qi was almost restored."

Chu Yue's eyes shone. "Really?"

"Really. I really sense that kind of feeling."

Chu Yue contemplated for a moment, and then said, "That's good. I'll have Houyi Bow remain with you. Diligently interact with it; perhaps it will help you recover your power. However, I'll need to dispatch some men to come guard it. After all, the Godly Bow is our Empire of Chu's national treasure. It's just in case a thief were to find out about it being here and come to try steal it, which wouldn't be any good."

Chen Nan assumed a look of gratitude. With teary eyes, he said, "Your Highness the princess, for the sake of helping me recover my power, you'd actually let me borrow the national treasure. Such benevolence. If I recover my power, I'll pledge my life to the Empire of Chu to repay your kindness."

Chu Yue dully smiled. She nimbly left.

Beginning on that day, some imperial guards were stationed outside of Chen Nan's courtyard. Day and night, they guarded his courtyard.

"Are they here to prevent robbers from stealing Houyi Bow, or are they worried that I'll take Houyi Bow and abscond?" He didn't think too deeply about this question. After all, Chu Yue had left a pretty good impression on him.

For the past few days, Chen Nan had been rather puzzled. He admitted that for a while now, he had held a good opinion of Nalan Ruoshui, he believed that it definitely wasn't love. But that day he hadn't gotten to see the beautiful doctor, he felt that his heart had become vacant.

Originally, he wasn't too sure of his own feelings until Nalan Ruoshui became occupied. It was only when she had vanished from his line of sight for a few days did he feel that his heart contained Nalan Ruoshui's figure. But after careful consideration, he ultimately concluded that it was nothing more than a good opinion.

There are some matters that people will never be able to forget. The reality etched in the bones and engraved in one's heart will never be erased. Up until now, Chen Nan had been unable to forget about his confidante from ten thousand years ago. The scene of Yu Xin dying in place of him frequently emerged in his mind. Whenever he recalled the bits and pieces from his past, his heart would become unbearably pained. He didn't know how much time he needed until he could begin a new relationship.

Although Chen Nan didn't know the beautiful doctor's opinion, he felt that Nalan Ruoshui seemed to have been dodging something. Whenever she faced him, she wasn't as undisturbed as she once was. His heart skipped a beat. "I mustn't misunderstand others and myself!"

"Could she..."

Today, after Chen Nan arrived inside the ancient book room, he helped the old man thoroughly translate the last few pages of the ancient book. The old man grasped the translated scroll in his hands. "I've already gotten what I've wanted. What about you, have you found whatever it is you've wanted to find?"

Chen Nan, startled, said, "Ah, what do you mean?"

"Heihei..." the old man laughed. The ravines covering his face shuddered.

"Youngster, you're rather complicated. Few in years, but your cultivation is already this astonishing. Not only that, but you can also understand ancient languages. You're truly a genius!"

"Ah? Old man, what are you talking about? Why can't I understand you?"

The old man said, "Youngster, you don't have to keep pretending. I don't harbour any malicious intent towards you. Actually, since the first day you set foot in this room, I already discovered that you were a profound xiulianist. Your cultivation ought to have just reached the third rank."

Chen Nan's mind was boggled. The xiulianist aura that his body emitted was extremely faint. He never expected the old man to be able to see through him on their first encounter.

The old man said, "If you aren't yet twenty years old, with your cultivation, you'd be considered as one of the top twenty xiulianists under the age of twenty on the continent. If you're almost twenty five years old, your cultivation would still enable you to be considered as one of the top two hundred xiulianists on the continent. No matter what age group you belong to, you'd be considered as one of the most remarkable young experts."

Chen Nan didn't speak. He calmly observed the situation develop.

The old man said, "Youngster, you've suppressed it pretty well. I believe that there aren't too many people that are capable of seeing through your outstanding skill, but I'm capable of it."

Chen Nan nodded. "Old man, your vision is indeed as bright as a torch. Junior cannot possibly hide when in the presence of senior."

The old man nodded as well. "What are you looking for?"

Chen Nan didn't reply. Instead, he asked, "What is senior looking for? And did you get it?"

The old man laughed. The heaps of wrinkles on his face all lightly shuddered together. It was actually kind of frightening.

"Heihei, youngster, I had you translate ancient text that was disordered with sentences that were broken apart and scattered. You probably hold considerable amount of resentment for me, right?"

Chen Nan said, "No, that's not true."

The old man said, "I didn't have any other methods. That book is a thing from heretic groups. Its contents involve many taboos. Ordinary people can't possibly tolerate them. I was afraid that if you were to find out, you'd loathe my old self and not help me translate it. Because of that, I set up this scheme."

Chen Nan asked, "A thing from heretic groups?"

The old man answered, "Yes, I had no other alternative. I'm already over a hundred and seventy years old now. My body is already deteriorating beyond recognition. I didn't fully cultivate Dao, and I wasn't too talented in martial study, so I can't turn my body youthful again..."

"Over a hundred and seventy years old! Become youthful again?!" Chen Nan cried out, startled.

"Yes. Over seventy years ago, I had a little accomplishment in my martial cultivation. When I was a hundred years old, I regained my youthfulness. In these past ten or so years, although my power has progressed profoundly, I was incapable of stepping into even higher levels all along. My body gradually began to age; time isn't waiting for me! The realm of immortals is becoming farther and farther away."

Chen Nan's jaw dropped in awe. He never thought that the old man in front of him, seemingly in the last moments of his life, could actually be an exceptional expert. The old man's 'little accomplishment' that he had mentioned was definitely not merely just 'little'; it was definitely a major success in power.

The old man continued, "For the purpose of prolonging my life, I had no choice but to research evil books for alternative methods and techniques in the hope that one day, I'd be able to comprehend and transcend life and death."

Chen Nan was amazed. "Study evil books? Transcend life and death?"

"Yes. Actually, there was originally no difference between justice and

evil in this world. 'Justice' is merely acknowledged by the overwhelming majority of people, yet 'evil' is something that the overwhelming majority cannot possibly tolerate. Now that I've become this old, I can see through everything. I've long ago realized that there isn't a difference between justice and evil, and I pay no mind about whatever xiulianist books. As long as I can prolong my life, then that's 'justice'."

Although Chen Nan thought that there was some reason in these words, he felt a chill run down his spine. He mentally said, "People say Buddha ages into a devil. Once this old guy attains a certain level of power, won't he eventually fall onto the path of demons?" He was now certain that this old man's cultivation was of the fifth rank at the very least.

The old man reiterated, "Youngster, what are you looking for?"

"It's as senior says, I'm indeed searching for something. I've said before that I'm extraordinarily interested in ancient legends and mythology. In particular, the history of Shenmo Cemetery leaves me silly and bewildered. With the help of the imperial family's boundless collection of books and records, I aspire to unearth its veil and uncover the mystery."

A light flashed through the old man's eyes. "Shenmo Cemetery has been bewildering for all eternity. I don't know how many generations have been perplexed by it. If you're able to unravel the spider's thread and horse tracks, you'll definitely cause a sensation throughout the entire continent. Have you found anything?"

Chen Nan sighed. "Nothing. I've rummaged through nearly the entire ancient book room, yet Shenmo Cemetery is like an endless void; there's nothing at all on it. There isn't a single book that has its history recorded."

The old man said, "Ai, the truth has already been annihilated from history. If you want to learn about what happened ten thousand years ago, I'm afraid you'll only find out once you enter heaven."

Chen Nan nodded in agreement. The Empire of Chu was the eastern continent's most formidable empire. Its imperial library could be said to be all-inclusive, yet there wasn't even the slightest trace of Shenmo Cemetery's origins recorded. It was obvious that the truth of its origins would not be found within historical records.

At this time, Chen Nan suddenly sensed a peculiar undulation rippling softly through the ancient book room. It was exactly the same as that time when he had first stepped into the room. Previously, he hadn't paid much attention to it. This time, he shut his two eyes and carefully sensed that hint of undulation. Slowly, a look of astonishment arose on his face. That trace undulation was unexpectedly coming from underground.

Seeing his face undergo a drastic change, the old man nodded in acknowledgement. "To be even able to sense this trace, subtle undulation, youngster is indeed not simple. Your body's spiritual root is evident."

Chen Nan asked, "Senior, what is that?"

The old man replied, "Alright, for the purpose of repaying your help in translating that ancient scripture for me, I'll lead you to go take a look."

The old man led Chen Nan before a bookshelf. With some effort, he pushed the bookshelf to the side. After that, he fumbled about on the

floor. A pitch-black tunnel entrance appeared before Chen Nan's eyes. The undulation was coming from that precise place.

Chen Nan simply didn't dare trust his own eyes. The majestic imperial library surprisingly had this kind of secretive place.

The old man said, "Seventy years ago, I had a little success in martial arts, and my body's spiritual root began to open. I accidentally sensed this trace, peculiar undulation. I never thought that you'd naturally possess a spiritual root. Ai, some people just cannot be compared to others!"

Chen Nan was a little doubtful. "How can this imperial ancient book room have this kind of secret tunnel?"

The old man smiled. "This tunnel is something that I personally secretly excavated."

"You excavated it?" Chen Nan was amazed. This old guy's courage was seriously too much.

"Anything is possible. The emperor wouldn't dare say anything even if I were to brazenly dig out a cavern under his throne, because I'm his daddy."

Fainting! Crazily fainting! Chen Nan was seriously a little bit at a loss. He never thought this old man could be so great.

"Follow closely behind me. I'll lead you down to take a look."

The tunnel spiralled down, snaking underneath the ground. Chen Nan stepped down with gentle footsteps, following the old man. He was more or less apprehensive. Following the pitch-black tunnel, they descended about thirty or so meters down. About ten meters below them, a bright light shone. The two of them arrived at the origin of the bright light. The tunnel that the old man had excavated intersected with this place in the form of the character 丁.

The tunnel was historical and motley. The four walls were as hard as unshakeable diamond. One could imagine how challenging it must have been to dig out this tunnel. The tunnel was square. A night pearl was embedded into the wall about every three zhang. The bright light was being emitted from this exact pearl.

Chen Nan sighed in amazement. "Wow, how lavish. A pearl is already priceless; it's hard to imagine there would be one here. How many pearls are being used as ordinary light sources here?" With that said, his two eyes stared unblinkingly at those pearls.

The old man said, "Boy, grow up a bit. Do you want to rob a tomb?"

"Ah, th-this is a tomb?" Chen Nan felt his back turn cold. He found the light emanating from those pearls had somewhat of a bewitching strangeness to them.

"Of course. What kind of living person lives underground?"

"No way. How can there actually be a tomb constructed underneath the magnificent Empire of Chu's imperial palace?"

"At the time when the imperial palace was being constructed, who knew there'd be something underground? No one would dig fifty meters into the ground."

The old man led Chen Nan along the ancient tunnel towards the relatively bright end. The only thing inside the spacious tunnel was the 'tata' sounds of their footsteps. It caused the old tomb to appear especially hidden and desolate.

Following the winding, ancient tunnel, the two of them arrived at a bright hall. Although the great hall was underground and guarded from corrosion from the rain, snow, wind, and frost, it was still engraved with the vestiges of years past. The historical site was full of stains and markings. The four walls of the hall were all exquisitely sculpted with many legendary gods, demons, devils, and monsters... Pearls were embedded among the sculptures, causing the entire hall to be as bright as daytime. The vivid, lifelike sculptures were illuminated by the pearls. It seemed like they possessed spirits, as if they desired to break out from the wall.

A white jade platform was situated at the center of the ancient hall. The jade platform was penetratingly luminous, emitting a gentle brilliance. One glance was enough to know that it was top quality jade. What captivated Chen Nan's interest wasn't the white jade platform, but rather, it was the person on top of the jade stage. A tall, stalwart, middle-aged man stood at the center of the jade platform.

The middle-aged man's head was covered in long, pitch-black hair that drifted to his shoulders. His face was bronze in colour. His long eyebrows reached his temples. His nose was straight, mouth square. His pair of

eyes, a resonating black, intimidated one's very soul; it was a terrifying gaze. However, what made one's heart tremble the most was the middle-aged man's imposing manner. He was peerlessly towering. A look of heroism, of disdain for the world, came forth from the corner of his eyes. It made the middle-aged man appear to look down on all living things, as if gods and devils were mere ordinary life forms.

Chen Nan's eyes were so impassioned, tears almost escaped down his face. The middle-aged man's appearance was very much similar to that of his father. Their eyes had the same wise, penetrating, imposing expression, as if they were tyrants over the land under heaven. That kind of egotistical, self-centered arrogance—that unrivalled appearance—deeply overwhelmed him.

The old man said, "We're finally here. That trace, peculiar undulation is radiating from the man in front of us who has already perished. This senior truly must have been a supreme talent!"

Upon hearing the two words 'already perished', Chen Nan mind jolted. He simply didn't believe his own two ears. He once again attentively sized up the man before him before finally discovering a hint of brilliance among his long hair. To his surprise, it was the hilt of a sword. The two words 'flying sword' flashed through his mind. The peerless, domineering, middle-aged man had been pierced through the head by a flying sword and died.

"Damn, this unmatched expert actually died under a flying sword?" Chen Nan wasn't totally convinced. The imposing manner of the middle-aged man in front of him was not at all weaker than that of his father, Chen Zhan. He was certain that he had long ago eclipsed the fifth rank. That year, after Chen Zhan arrived at the peak of the martial way, even those xiudaoists practicing the Dao Mahayana could barely withstand his

blows. He previously heard his mother once say, "With martial arts with that extent of cultivation, this mortal world no longer possesses any blades or weapons capable of causing injury. It'll be hard to come across a worthy opponent."

He walked around the jade platform. Behind the jade platform, he found some bone meal. In another nearby place, he found a pile of broken fragments of bone, each about one cun long. He didn't need to think twice to know that these two people had died under the unrivalled power of that middle-aged man on the stage.

The old man said, "That book I have was found here. From the calligraphy in the book, I determined that this all dates back six or seven thousand years. This senior's body is basically immortal, still upright and standing, never falling over. It's simply too hard to believe."

Emotion welled in Chen Nan's heart as he sighed, "This senior's power must have surged to the skies for his corporeal body to be able to successfully condense into an inextinguishable body. The strong will always be strong. Even after death, their imposingness will still be as compelling as before."

The old man said, "Go up and take a look. There's some handwriting at his feet."

"Oh?" Chen Nan's mind shook. Together with the old man, he leapt on top of the jade platform.

On the sparkling jade platform surface were a few lines of writing carved with strength, as if it were etched with intense enthusiasm. The

strokes were vigorous and forceful, yet there was some lingering sorrowful air also present, causing one's heart to boundlessly sigh.

A demon becomes immortal,  
Heaven cannot tolerate this.  
Behead the demon and vanquish evil,  
Admonish the world.  
I lament,  
The demon has a younger brother,  
Their encounter was by sheer luck.  
With gravely injured bodies,  
They resisted one another,  
Without the power to reverse heaven,  
They perish along with the enemy.  
With a body courageous,  
The demon dies in a cave,  
With my body shamed,  
I seal myself here!

"So it's like this, ai!" Chen Nan let out an emotional sigh. "Although the demon had only just reached the realm of immortals, he was still an immortal after all. This senior's heroism soars to the clouds. He actually eliminated an immortal. How admirable, admirable!"

The old man was also moved. "Yes, if he hadn't been left by himself, perhaps this world would have another formidable martial immortal!"

Chen Nan sighed, "While living, one is unrivalled and performs miracles, able to carry heaven and support the earth. After death, his figure is immortal and continues to stand erect. Boundlessly domineering, frozen in persistence, he is a peerless hero who looks down at the world with disdain."

After that, he suddenly began to laugh. "Haha~! I'm currently brimming with confidence in the martial way. Immortals can be formidable, but can't a martial artist at the very peak still eliminate them? Just imagine if a martial artist were to reach the realm of immortals, heihei..."

The old man said, "I'll bring you to the place of the demon xiulianist to have a look."

Chen Nan followed the old man through the ancient hall. They went along the tunnel until they arrived at an ancient cave that seemed like the purgatory of the human world. Serene, thick light suffused from the pearls. The ground was an expanse of white. Looking carefully, he unexpectedly saw innumerable dried bones, some of which were already completely smashed. There was a draft that lightly blew by. Waves of dust were swept up by it. A stuffy air diffused throughout the ancient tunnel. In the middle of the endless withered bones, there was a dried up puddle of blood. The presence of a demon clung to the four edges of the sanguine pond. A thick, cold air dispersed from it, as if a ghost was floating in the puddle.

This was an eerie and terrible tunnel. Within the extreme silence, there seemed to be hissing and howling, as if myriad living souls were present. This was frightening enough to make one's scalp numb and chill one's heart from inside out.

Chen Nan looked around. His heart was startled and his courage struggled to battle on. "This is the location of the demon xiulianist? This place is truly devoid of all emotion. In order for this place to be private enough, he actually massacred countless living creatures. For someone to ascend to immortality like this, heaven really cannot tolerate it!"

With that said, he couldn't help but look towards the old man. If he hadn't guessed incorrectly, the so-called evil book that was currently in the old man's possession had to be this demon xiulianist's demonic cultivation technique. His body involuntarily turned cold. The man standing in front of him could perhaps be the second demonic Daoist.

The old man laughed. The wrinkles on his face shuddered. "Youngster, don't be afraid. I'm a man who practices martial arts, how could I still proceed to cultivate Dao, let alone a very nefarious, very bloody, cultivation technique? For someone that practices martial arts to change to cultivating Dao, even if it didn't go against the laws of the world, it'd still be incredibly hard to achieve; the two sides are inherently distinct. I only wish to borrow some unique opinions from that demonic book. For the sake of obtaining fresh blood, I merely go to the imperial kitchen every day to butcher some livestock."

The chill on Chen Nan's body warmed a degree. Soon, the two of them departed from the sinister, frightening ancient tunnel.

After arriving back in the ancient hall, Chen Nan went to the jade platform. Intently staring at that peerlessly strong practitioner, he said to the old man, "When I was in the ancient book room, I previously only sensed this peculiar undulation twice throughout all my time there. Why couldn't I sense it all the time?"

The old man said, "The two times you sensed it were by chance at the exact time of a night with a full moon. It is only then does the undulation become strong enough. I assume that it has something to do with the layout of this place. This place probably harbours some ancient formations that accumulate original vital qi from the world."

"This place has ancient formations?"

"That's right. It can be assumed it was arranged by that demonic Daoist during his time long ago. If one were to cultivate here, it'd definitely be half the work for twice the effect. However, the risk is inevitably amplified. If one's cultivation has been too smooth—if one hasn't experienced appropriate hardships that would sharpen their mind—they will definitely develop the heart of a demon. It's very easy to accidentally become a devil."

Chen Nan nodded in agreement. "What is called having a way must have a loss. This world is in equilibrium. This is knowledge everyone must possess: the understanding of when something must be renounced. That time, the demon Daoist was too avaricious and vicious. After arranging a great formation to gather original vital qi from the world, he still massacred how many more living beings? If he hadn't done so, perhaps he may not have attracted murderous misfortune towards himself."

The old man said, "Talking is one matter, doing is a different matter. Many lousy characteristics can take root in the depths of one's soul. In the face of tremendous allure, it is very hard to have self-control. For example, you can currently be said to be a peerless expert with unrivalled power, but is your heart not tempted?"

Chen Nan laughed. "I'm tempted, of course I'm tempted. But I don't

have this kind of opportunity."

The old man said, "What if you really did have such an opportunity?"

"Although I'd be tempted, I'd still give it up in the end."

The old man's eyes unblinkingly gazed at Chen Nan. "For what reason?"

Chen Nan replied, "Obtaining power externally has always been inferior to the pure strength obtained from personal cultivation. I'm afraid it would restrain my power's development."

The old man sighed. "Youngster, you are very responsible. Although you are responsible enough, I'm not. At the time when death threatens my life, if there was such formidable power offered to me like this, I'd absolutely not renounce it."

Chen Nan laughed, but didn't say anything.

The old man said, "Youngster, are you willing to lend me a helping hand? Can you help me break free from the shadow of death?"

A puzzled look appeared on Chen Nan's face.

The wrinkles that littered the old man's face shuddered. "Youngster, are you aware? The first time you entered the ancient book room, I could sense the spiritual qi within your body. I carefully observed you and discovered your body's innate spiritual root. If I were able to get help

from someone with an innate spiritual root, there may be a chance I'd be able to obtain tremendous power and thereby no longer have the need to cultivate the demonic book. I'd also be able to continue living for a few more decades."

The old man pointed at the domineering, revered, peerless expert atop the jade platform. "Do you know why there's a trace, peculiar undulation surging forth from his body? It's because there is tremendous power trapped within his body. It's his unrivalled cultivation. If I were able to extract it..."

When Chen Nan heard the old man's words reach this point, his heart chilled. Chen Nan was baffled. The old man never needed to bring him here to repay his kindness. It turns out that everything had been premeditated by the old man all along.

"Senior, you must be dreaming. It's already been a millennium; that peerless expert's heroic spirit has already faded away. How can there still be formidable power stored within his body? I think it's because his immortal body and the original vital qi from the world has resonated together to produce this effect."

The old man said, "This possibility hasn't been ruled out, but what I guessed may also be a possibility. If we don't try, how will we know? Youngster, are you willing to help me?"

Chen Nan asked, "My cultivation is not up to par with yours, so how can I help you?"

The old man explained, "The cultivation does not matter, it is your

body's spiritual root that permits you to easily attract the original vital qi of the world. If the two of us cooperate, we can surely extract the power from within the peerless expert's body."

Chen Nan's heart was very unwilling to help this deeply scheming old man. He was even more unwilling to vandalize that peerless expert, but considering his current unfortunate situation, he had no choice but to comply with the old man's request.

The old man was jubilant. "Your spiritual root is natural and innate. My spiritual root is acquired via cultivation; it cannot possibly compare with yours. In a moment, place your two palms on his back. Carefully sense the power within his body, and then lead it out. I'll be nearby assisting you."

After climbing onto the jade platform, Chen Nan inwardly said, "Please excuse me." He pressed his two hands against the back of that senior's inextinguishable body. He carefully sensed that trace, peculiar undulation.

The old man also reached out and pressed his hands against the back of the inextinguishable body and closed his eyes, carefully feeling it.

A complicated, indescribable feeling seemed to be drawn out from ancient times up to the present and transmitted itself into Chen Nan's heart. In a flash, it made him seemingly experience thousands of years of life. He felt a devastating sense of loss. He fearfully jumped back. If it wasn't for the inextinguishable body's ice-cold touch, he truly would have believed that the peerless expert had resurrected. He knew that that complicated feeling was the peerless expert's feelings at the point of his death. It was a sense of loss, a sense of helplessness...

Chen Nan quickly calmed his heart. Pushing aside all of his distracting thoughts, he carefully sensed the peculiar undulation in the inextinguishable body. Suddenly, the peculiar undulation seemed to resonate with his being. A boundless power began surging forth from the inextinguishable body. Chen Nan was astounded. The body left behind by the peerless expert unexpectedly truly stored a tremendous power within. He was absolutely shocked. This exceeded his imagination. The man had been dead for thousands of years already, yet such an unrivalled power still surprisingly remained in his body.

Chen Nan took a furtive glance and saw that although the old man had his hands pressed up against the back of inextinguishable body, he didn't seem to feel anything. He secretly came to a realization in his mind. He couldn't possibly lead the tremendous power out and pour it into the old man's body. He felt the old man's scheming was too deep. He had not been transparent with his actions at all the whole time. If he were permitted to absorb this exceptionally formidable power, who knows what kind of dreadful consequences would arise.

After a while, Chen Nan released his hands. He let out a long sigh. "Excluding that trace, peculiar undulation, I can't feel any power flowing whatsoever within this senior's inextinguishable body."

Hearing him say that, the old man also released his hands, a look of disappointment too hard to conceal was evident on his face.

After leaving the ancient hall, in the spacious ancient tunnel, Chen Nan was incredibly nervous. He feared this deeply scheming old man would kill him right then and there to silence him. When they exited the tunnel entrance at the ancient book storeroom, he finally let out a long breath of

air.

The old man pushed the bookshelf back into his original position. He gave a laugh towards Chen Nan. "Heihei... Youngster, don't be afraid, I won't be a danger to you. You are a brave hero of the younger generation of my Empire of Chu. How could I destroy an eventual exceptional expert of the Empire of Chu?"

The old man patted his shoulders. "Diligently work hard. My old self can rely on that demonic book to live another twenty, thirty years. In this period of time, I can give you a few tips and directions."

Chen Nan, stupefied, nodded his head. It was only when he arrived back at the Residence of Eccentrics did he become aware of the icy, cold sweat that permeated his body.

## Volume 2 Chapter 5: Dragon Rider

After Xianhuan Continent and Mohuan Continent merged together, eastern martial study, Daoist arts, western battle qi, and magic all collided intensely. Vital qi against battle qi, Daoist magical weapons against magic, sword qi and battle qi raged haphazardly across the battlefield. The might of Daoist magical weapons and magic dazzled and flared.

In the early stages, from the huge resistance put up by western xiulianists, no one doubted the might of Daoist arts and magic. Every somewhat successful xiudaoist and magi ranked Intermediate or higher all possessed super horrifying strength. They were capable of directly manipulating the world's original vital qi. A single xiudaoist could handle ten western pugilists. A magus ranked at Intermediate or higher could also deal with ten western martial artists single-handedly.

However, the amount of xiudaoists and magi was incredibly small. The required constitution for cultivating Daoist arts or studying magic was exceedingly harsh. Therefore, Daoist arts and magic were not at all widely popular. Additionally, many xiudaoists isolated themselves from the mortal world; very few showed their presence to commoners. Because of this, in the eyes of the people, xiudaoists were the most mysterious. For someone to cultivate magic, one would require tremendous amounts of expensive magical materials. There was no way of becoming a successful magus without having vast wealth.

Although there were also requirements in regards to one's constitution in order to cultivate eastern martial arts or western battle qi, they were absolutely not as severe; even an average person was capable of

cultivating them, but because there were differences between everyone's constitutions, there was naturally a notable difference in success between practitioners. To compare them, martial artists who cultivated their bodies were inferior to xiudaoists and magi. Other than melee combat, these martial artists were simply not able to be opponents to those xiulianists who could directly control the world's original vital qi.

It was only natural that not all circumstances were absolute. There were a few eastern martial artists who could cultivate to the highest, most profound, level. Any xiulianist who came across such a formidable eastern martial artist in battle would have a headache.

Furthermore, there would occasionally be an eastern martial artist who was capable of cultivating unrivalled power. Their super petrifying strength could even be said to be without rival under heaven: a xiulianist's worst nightmare to face in battle. But as everyone knows, progress in martial study is sluggish. Even during the span of many centuries, a martial artist capable of cultivating up to the highest profound level is rarely seen. It was because of this that martial arts began to gradually decline.

It was the same situation with western martial artists. Although there were many western martial artists who cultivated their bodies, the average strength of their population was far from the levels of xiudaoists and magi. However, there was a unique xiulianist among these martial artists. Their super strength was not at all weaker than xiudaoists and magi. In the common people's eyes, these figures were known as dragon riders.

In order to become a dragon rider, one must first directly tame their own dragon.

Naturally, there was also a division of strength between dragons. Western dragons could be divided from weakest to strongest in five ranks: Land Dragons, Flying Dragons, Auxiliary Dragons, Monolithic Dragons, and Holy Dragons. As it turns out, these five ranks corresponded with their xiulianist counterparts, so there were Land Dragon Riders, Flying Dragon Riders, Auxiliary Dragon Riders, Monolithic Dragon Riders, and Holy Dragon Riders—these were the five ranks of dragon riders.

Thus, in order to become a dragon rider, one must first attain a rank, and then they must also directly tame a dragon of the corresponding level. Therefore, all dragon riders were powerful. In a way, the reason why dragon riders sought after dragons as mounts was to prove that they possessed formidable strength.

In the western continent, Monolithic Dragon Riders were very few in number, and Holy Dragon Riders were even more like phoenix feathers and unicorn horns. But to be able to attain such a high level, all these dragon riders possessed supreme, tyrannical strength. Even those successful xiulianists—those magi and xiudaoists—didn't dare lightly oppose their attack.

After Chen Nan returned to the Residence of Eccentrics from the imperial ancient book room, he still felt some lingering fear recalling the ancient, underground tomb he had just traversed.

"This old man is truly hard to make out; he actually didn't kill me in order to silence me. However, I nevertheless should prematurely leave this place of right and wrong..."

[T/N: 是非之地/place of right and wrong; meaning 'a troublesome place'.]

After going through this experience, he finally understood that old saying: "Outside of people, there are people. Outside of heaven, there is heaven." That old man's outward appearance made him seem to be utterly senile and incomparably feeble, yet he was actually an exceptional expert with terrifying cultivation. This was following his encounter with Zhuge Chengfeng. He had seen yet another fifth ranked xiulianist. In fact, he may even already exceed the five ranks.

"Boy, why are you so dazed again? You seriously haven't grown up yet!" With two hands, the Old Poison Devil clung onto the wall of the courtyard, looking at him.

"Fuck! Perverted old man, you were peeping on me again!" Chen Nan exited his house.

"A heart beating is inferior to taking action. Come on, let's go take a look at your cool water together."

"You..." Recalling Nalan Ruoshui in his mind, Chen Nan hesitated. If he were to leave, he feared that he'd never be able to see the girl he favoured again.

"Oh, I forgot, it's Ruoshui, heihei..." The Old Poison Devil was all smiles.

[T/N: 涼水/liangshui/cool water is one character away from 若水/Ruoshui.]

If not for that fact that the old fellow was saturated with poison from

head to toe, Chen Nan really would have given him a good smacking.

The Old Poison Devil smiled. "A dragon rider came to the Residence of Eccentrics today. Many people have gone to see his dragon. Your Ruoshui originally wanted to come get you so that you two could've gone to see it together, but you weren't here, so she went first. Come on, let's go join them and have some fun."

Dragon rider was synonymous with strong practitioner. Dragons were powerful yet mysterious creatures. Chen Nan's interest was immediately piqued. He followed the Old Poison Devil and left.

Today, the Residence of Eccentrics wasn't as peaceful as it normally was. The sparring ring within the residence was full of people gathered together. Even the ordinarily rarely seen Old Witch deserted her 'great magical research project' to come here.

It was also Chen Nan's first time seeing this many eccentrics gathered together. The overwhelming majority of these people were formidable xiulianists. Of course, there were also people that belonged to fields similar to that of the Old Poison Devil—outstanding researchers with immense talent. These people were mostly above the age of thirty. Young people around the age of twenty like him numbered no more than thirty five, so he was quickly able to find Nalan Ruoshui within the crowd.

Nalan Ruoshui was wearing aqua blue clothing, appearing just like an elegant orchid in a secluded valley: naturally graceful and tranquil, indifferent and enlightened. Seeing Chen Nan and the Old Poison Devil enter the sparring ring, a faint smile appeared on her peaceful face.

Chen Nan waved at her. "Ruoshui!"

The Old Poison Devil beside him strangely shouted, "Ruoshui, I've come! I haven't seen you in half a day, yet it's as if we were separated for half of autumn~!"

Chen Nan stomped on the old man's foot. The roaring of a dying boar erupted from the old man, garnering strange looks from everyone present.

A smile was evident on Nalan Ruoshui's face. "Chen Nan, how could your steps be so careless!"

The Old Poison Devil shouted, "He wasn't being careless, it was deliberate!"

Nalan Ruoshui ignored him and continued speaking to Chen Nan. "Next time the ground is unsteady, use a little more strength so that you won't stumble."

The Old Poison Devil was left speechless.

Seeing Chen Nan and Nalan Ruoshui head towards the ring together, the Old Poison Devil indignantly shouted, "Destroying the bridge after crossing the river~!"

[T/N: 過河拆橋/destroying the bridge after crossing the river; meaning 'to abandon one's benefactor after one's goal has been met'.]

In the center of the sparring ring, there lay a gigantic, fierce creature. Its body was covered in dark green scales that flickered in the light. It was vicious and terrifying. There was no need to ask; this was the dragon rider's dragon. The dragon's body was about seven zhang long. There was a pair of horns growing out of its head. On its flank, a pair of giant, fleshy wings protruded outwards. Its appearance seemed quite ferocious.

A tall youth stood beside the dragon. The youth appeared outstanding and bright. His build was tall and sturdy. His rugged physique was brimming with explosive power. He possessed masculine beauty.

A peculiar look formed on Nalan Ruoshui's face. "Can you see? That person is the dragon rider. He is Great General Sima Changfeng's son. His name is Sima Lingkong. For ten straight years, he cultivated with experts in the western continent. He recently finished his studying and has returned. The emperor already conferred upon him the title of eccentric. Today, he officially enters the Residence of Eccentrics."

Chen Nan nodded. "Oh, so it's this major. En, eccentrics are conferred the title?"

"Of course. Every eccentric enjoys the status of a state official, how could they not be conferred the title?" With that said, Nalan Ruoshui glanced at him. "You're classified as an exception, of course. You're a secret state official, but... ai. You... It'd be better if you recovered your power already! Even though you don't possess the envious glory of a state official, at least have formidable strength..." When she finally finished, she seemed slightly emotional.

Chen Nan didn't notice how bizarre Nalan Ruoshui was acting, but his heart felt somewhat bitter. He was going to depart from this place soon;

it was possible that he'd never be able to see this beautiful doctor again. But here and now, he was still unable to say anything.

Nalan Ruoshui said, "Look, this dragon is truly powerful and brazen. I've never seen such a huge, valiant creature before."

"Powerful and brazen? No matter how I look at it, I still think it looks like a winged, pregnant lizard."

"Puchi," Nalan Ruoshui giggled.

"Heavens, what are you looking at? That's a dragon!"

Chen Nan said, "Last time when I was in the mountain range at the western border, I saw a green dragon at least thirty zhang long. In comparison to that green dragon, this one is simply a dragon's grandson —a baby dragon."

"Oh really? Was it actually that big?" Nalan Ruoshui looked doubtful.

"Gaga, this little boy is right. What he saw was a Monolithic Dragon. Monolithic Dragons have a length of thirty zhang or more. This is nothing more but an ordinary Flying Dragon; it's only at a level a bit higher than that of a Land Dragon." No one knew when the Old Witch had arrived behind Chen Nan and Nalan Ruoshui.

Chen Nan turned around and greeted his terrifying neighbour.

The Old Witch nodded in acknowledgement as she continued, "Western dragons have five ranks. In order, they are Land Dragons, Flying Dragons, Auxiliary Dragons, Monolithic Dragons, and Holy Dragons. Other than Land Dragons, the remaining four ranks of dragons are all capable of flight. Land Dragons are about five zhang long, Flying Dragons are about seven zhang long, Auxiliary Dragons are between fifteen and twenty zhang long, and Monolithic Dragons are at the very minimum thirty zhang long. As for Holy Dragons, I've never seen one before, but I've heard others say that Holy Dragons are all incredibly rare. Their powerful strength absolutely isn't proportional to the size of their bodies."

Nalan Ruoshui smiled. "Magic-popo's knowledge is indeed extensive."

"Gaga, I stayed in the western continent for some time. If I didn't even know this, then wouldn't others laugh at me? However, girl, your mouth is quite sweet. Truly charming. It's much better than that little girl Chu Yu's. Whenever that little girl sees me, she wants to run away."

At the center, the dragon rider Sima Lingkong was explaining something to everyone watching. Everyone listened with ardent interest. At that moment, Princess Chu Yu suddenly appeared like a thief. She constantly peered towards the center of the ring. It appeared she was looking for someone.

Chen Nan and Nalan Ruoshui looked at each other, both unable to contain their grins.

The Old Witch furiously said, "This damn girl! Am I really that scary? Every time she comes to the Residence of Eccentrics, she always does it so covertly. Hmph, it really pisses me off!"

With her reconnaissance of the 'enemy positions' complete, the princess let out a breath of air. Like an effervescent fairy, she ran to the center of the ring.

"Sima Lingkong, how audacious of you to not report to me, the princess, after returning!"

After everyone present saw the gorgeous little demon, grins covered their faces. But Sima Lingkong, originally in glowing spirits, looked like a deflating ball, immediately withering.

"Greetings, Your Highness the princess."

The princess's unruly nature erupted in full force. "The several people who went to the western continent to cultivate all reported to me after returning. Only you did not. Speak, is it because you failed to prepare a good present for me?" With that said, she circled the dragon, examining it. "This dragon is not bad. Is it the present you are giving to me? But it's a little ugly. Oh well, I'll make an effort to reluctantly accept it."

Upon hearing her words, Sima Lingkong's face turned green. He painstakingly smiled apologetically. "Princess Yu, this is my mount. The present I prepared for you is still at home. I will have it delivered to you shortly."

Chen Nan finally understood the meaning behind the little demon's 'external reputation' in the imperial capital. Whoever saw her all seemed to come down with a headache. One could imagine how difficult it must have been for the noble children within the imperial capital to survive

such miserable childhoods growing up with her.

"Are you trying to say you don't want to give this dragon to me?"

"It's not that... This..."

The princess gave a hump and said, "Miser, feel at ease. I don't want this small and ugly creature. In the mountain range at the western border, I saw a dragon that is much bigger than yours."

Sima Lingkong wiped the cold sweat off his forehead. "This is merely a Flying Dragon. It's natural that it's not as big as a Monolithic Dragon."

The princess said, "Is this dragon obedient? Can I ride it and fly?"

"Of course."

"That's great!" The princess immediately looked excited.

Sima Lingkong gave the Flying Dragon a few pats. "When you're in the air, be smooth and steady, okay?"

The Flying Dragon actually seemed to understand human speech, nodding its head.

Everyone was astounded.

The princess was also somewhat startled. She asked, "Can it understand human speech?"

"Of course. Dragons are intelligent creatures. Although it's only a Flying Dragon of the second rank, it can still understand some simple human words."

The princess excitedly climbed up onto the dragon's back. Just then, the Old Witch shouted from the back of the crowd, "Yu'er, if you want to fly, you can learn magic from me! Look how relaxed this is. Why should you need to ride other people's dragons?" With that said, the Old Witch floated up into the air and landed at the center of the ring.

The instant the princess saw the Old Witch, her face took a massive turn, but she quickly assumed her sweet smiling expression again.

"Hello, popo. I actually have something to do, so I have to go back to the imperial palace." Immediately after her words, she swiftly slipped off the dragon's back and, like a loach, bore her way out through the crowd.

All the eccentrics in the crowd looked at each other in dismay. Then, they all broke out into great laughter.

The Old Witch loudly shouted, "When that little girl sees me, she wants to run. Come back." She read aloud an incantation and, using the wind element Wind Soaring Technique, she quickly chased after her.

From afar, the princess could be heard shouting, "Don't! I really have to go back to the palace~!"

...

The princess was finally caught and brought back. She pouted her little mouth, but she didn't dare have a fit.

When Chen Nan saw her embarrassed look, he couldn't help but suddenly break out into a grin. Nalan Ruoshui tugged at his clothes. "Don't smile. Can't you see everyone else is also restraining themselves? If that little girl sees you, you'll end up miserable in the future."

Chen Nan naturally understood the princess's demonic nature. When the princess's gaze headed towards his direction, he promptly stopped smiling.

The Old Witch laughed, "Gaga. Don't be upset, quite a few people beg me to teach them, but I still won't teach them. Don't you want to fly up into the sky? I can teach you!"

The Old Witch cast a spell. A sphere of aqua blue light surrounded the princess, raising her up into the air.

"Is it fun? As long as you learn it from me, you can do it too."

Although there was a look of excitement on the princess's face, after she heard the Old Witch's words, she resolutely shook her head.

The Old Witch immediately ceased her magical energy transportation

spell in anger. The princes shrieked as she dropped from the sky. In an instant, when she reached the ground, a ball of gentle light caught her, but her small face was already deathly white in fright.

Chen Nan finally understood why the princess was so afraid of the Old Witch. At the same time, he also understood why she was unwilling to pay respects to the Old Witch to be her teacher.

At that moment, Sima Lingkong took a step forward and said in greeting, "Greetings, Magic-popo."

"En, spare the courtesy. Lad, you aren't too bad. You're so young, yet you already have your own dragon."

Sima Lingkong said, "Senior, I don't deserve such praise. Junior is much inferior to senior. That year when senior was cultivating in the western continent, her mighty name was famous and widespread. There are even people today who still mention you."

The Old Witch quacked in laughter. "You are already pretty good. I reckon that in your generation of youths, you can already be regarded as a valiant individual. As long as you're willing to put in the effort, someday, you'll definitely become a fourth ranked Monolithic Dragon Rider."

No one knew when the Old Poison Devil had arrived behind Chen Nan and Nalan Ruoshui. He quietly muttered, "This damn old woman is really too shameless. Look at her pleased expression. I really can't tell if she's a bona fide Grand Magus or if she just stepped on some lucky dog shit. But this boy covered in muscle all over is really strong. To be capable of

becoming a Flying Dragon Rider at his age is already quite spectacular."

Chen Nan nodded in agreement. He had long since sensed the strong power within Sima Lingkong. The reputation of second ranked Flying Dragon Riders was indeed justified.

The princess took advantage of the Old Witch being occupied with conversing and furtively stood up and slipped away into the crowd. After a moment, the Old Witch suddenly realized the princess was absent. In a fury, she left to continue with her 'great magical research project'.

Just then, Sima Lingkong suddenly found Nalan Ruoshui. His eyes instantly shone. He burrowed through the crowd peering at the Flying Dragon and walked towards them.

"Ruoshui, you also came. If you want to see the Flying Dragon, I can bring it directly to your family home."

At that time, Chen Nan suddenly felt his right hand tighten. It was being gripped by Nalan Ruoshui's small, soft hand.

"No need. I only wanted to accompany Chen Nan to come take a look."

Cold lightning flared from Sima Lingkong's eyes. Seeing the two of them holding hands, he turned his sights on Chen Nan and asked, "Who's he?"

Nalan Ruoshui calmly answered, "He is someone I can entrust my life with."

Chen Nan was expressionless, but then his heart began to feel a little uneasy. Nalan Ruoshui was clearly already acquaintances with this muscular man. It was pretty obvious she had grabbed him for use as a shield. He had a feeling he was being used.

Sima Lingkong's eyes were about to breathe fire. He fiercely looked at Chen Nan and said, "Boy, screw off. This is a matter between me and Ruoshui, I hope you don't get involved."

Standing behind Chen Nan, the Old Poison Devil said, "Youngster, your words need not be so aggressive. Say whatever it is you want properly."

Now, the eccentrics looking at the Flying Dragon found that there was something going on at the side. They all turned their heads to look.

Nalan Ruoshui said, "Let's go." He grabbed Chen Nan's hand and they headed away from the ring.

Sima Lingkong couldn't restrain his fury. He shortly pushed his way before the two of them and angrily said, "Ruoshui, I hope you take note of our engagement. You're currently my fiancée, so don't be so friendly with others. Not only does this insult my family's principles, it insults the principles of your family as well."

Nalan Ruoshui heatedly replied, "Rubbish. Who's your fiancée? Please act dignified and don't speak without thinking. Step aside!"

With one hand, she pushed Sima Lingkong away. With the other hand,

she pulled Chen Nan into a sprint in the opposite direction. Chen Nan was very unhappy. He wanted to shake off Nalan Ruoshui's hand, but he hesitated. In the end, he didn't do anything.

All the eccentrics in the sparring ring began discussing and gossiping in succession.

Sima Lingkong stood in place for a moment. A faint sneer appeared at his lips as he chased after them.

After Nalan Ruoshui and Chen Nan ran away from the sparring ring, they went straight to Chen Nan's courtyard.

Once they arrived in front of Chen Nan's gate, Sima Lingkong arrived as well. "Ruoshui, what is the meaning of this? Don't you know that I like you? In a short while, my dad will propose our marriage to your family. What are you doing right now? How can you follow some irrelevant man?"

Nalan Ruoshui said, "Abandon that thought. I won't marry you."

"You..." A severe light flashed through Sima Lingkong's eyes. "Fine. Let's see what you're capable of. Hmph, when your dad agrees, I'll see whether or not you'll marry me."

An ominous glint in his eyes flickered. He said to Chen Nan, "Boy, treat the words I just said as wind past your ears, okay? I want you to stay away from me, do you understand? Screw off!"

[T/N: 耳旁風/wind past ears; meaning 'something you don't pay much attention to'.]

Chen Nan was already fairly upset. Hearing these words, his fire immediately braved three zhang. This made his ancestral profound skill that he had been forcibly suppressing to violently surge. A colossal imposingness erupted out from his body.

[T/N: 火冒三丈/fire braved three zhang; meaning 'get super angry'.]

Nalan Ruoshui, afraid of Sima Lingkong attacking Chen Nan, stepped protectively in front of Chen Nan. At the same time, the imperial guards dispatched by the head princess to protect Houyi Bow also sensed the formidable power fluctuation. Seven figures arrived in front of the three in an instant.

Chen Nan secretly cursed himself in shame, blaming his own impulsiveness. He quickly suppressed his power. The strong aura evaporated in a flash.

The people present grew suspicious. Nalan Ruoshui and the several warriors finally decided that that forceful killing intent had erupted from Sima Lingkong, while Sima Lingkong thought that that strong imposingness had come from the several warriors in front of him, because there was currently not even half a thread of power in Chen Nan's body. No matter how he probed, he couldn't sense any xiulianist aura on his body.

Sima Lingkong mocked, "Boy, are you a man? Hiding behind a woman, what kind of ability do you have?"

Chen Nan coldly gazed at him. "Dog, what are you barking about? She

clearly doesn't like you. How shameless of you to keep bitching about it."

Sima Lingkong shot him a livid laugh in return. "Heihei, you're a guy who is living off a woman. If I don't dismember your body into countless pieces, then I—"

"Enough! Sima Lingkong, are you finished? If you remain here making trouble and being rude, I'll report you to Her Highness." Nalan Ruoshui's expression was ashen. She had forgone her usual calmness.

"What's so great about this guy? What ability does he have? He can't even be considered a pretty boy. Ruoshui, you—"

"You're shameless!" Nalan Ruoshui furiously gnashed her teeth. She spun around and dragged Chen Nan into the courtyard.

Sima Lingkong started to follow them in, but the several warriors at the side reached out and stopped him. One of them said, "Young Master Sima, please halt. The head princess has ordered: without her approval, no one may enter even half a step into this courtyard."

This caused Sima Lingkong to quickly go mad with anger. His rage surged in his heart. He bellowed, "Why? Why can that adulterous couple go in?"

"Because this is actually Young Master Chen's courtyard. Nalan Ruoshui is acting under orders to treat his illness."

"What? That useless trash is also an eccentric?"

The several warriors didn't reply.

Sima Lingkong gradually calmed down. He murderously looked towards the courtyard, then spun around and left.

After they arrived inside the courtyard, Nalan Ruoshui quickly released Chen Nan's hand. She turned her face to the side and said, "Sorry."

The unhappiness in Chen Nan's heart gradually dissipated. "It's nothing."

"Aren't you going to ask me why I acted like this?"

"I'm waiting for you to tell me."

Nalan Ruoshui turned her body back towards him. "My father, Nalan Wencheng, is the left minister of the court. Sima Lingkong's father is also from the court. He's the Mighty Great General Sima Changfeng. The two of them are important ministers of the Empire of Chu, but they've never gotten along. For the past few years, the ministers of the court began to socialize and the relationship between the two of them began to warm a bit. Later, someone suggested that the two families bond by having their son and daughter marry in order to improve their relationship further.

"Inharmonious ministers are detrimental to the nation. Father agreed with those socializing court officials. At that time, the Mighty General also gladly agreed. Maybe others don't know Sima Lingkong's character, but I'm well aware of it. He had returned to the imperial city a few times

in recent years. Every time he'd come back, he'd always make a big deal about his accomplishments and other loathsome matters. He's basically just a distinguished thug.

"I understand my father's problem—I know he means well for the nation. I hate how Sima Lingkong's acts like an accomplished thug, but I can't do anything to change the facts. In a few days, Sima Changfeng will send people to visit and propose marriage. I don't know what to do. I can only provoke and upset Sima Lingkong so that he'll hate me, thereby ruining this marriage, so..."

"So you purposely dragged me in front of Sima Lingkong to provoke him?"

"Yes... Sorry."

"Ai, you really don't understand a man's mind. Doing this will only produce the opposite of what you want." Chen Nan really did somewhat sympathize with Nalan Ruoshui. This ordinarily incomparably calm girl was actually so helpless. As the daughter of a noble, she couldn't dictate her own happiness and could only be used as a bargaining chip in politics. He sighed. "How can I help you?"

A watery mist appeared in Nalan Ruoshui's eyes. Her voice trembled a little as she said, "I don't know... I don't even know what I should do..."

"How about..." Chen Nan really wanted to say: "How about I bring you someplace else?", but when he was on the verge of saying it, he swallowed the words back. Although he did hold some feelings towards Nalan Ruoshui, liking somebody was definitely not the same as loving

them. However, he already decided that when the time comes, he'd definitely help her.

"How about what?" A hopeful look was evident on Nalan Ruoshui's face.

"How about you run away from the wedding? Wait until this matter passes, then come back."

Nalan Ruoshui was rather disappointed. "I'm a girl, where can I go? I've never travelled anywhere far. I've never experienced Jianghu. I'm all by myself... Wuwu..."

[T/N: 江湖/Jianghu/river and lakes; meaning something like 'the martial world'.]

When she finished speaking, she couldn't endure it anymore and broke out into tears.

Chen Nan awkwardly scratched his head. He didn't have a handkerchief. In the end, he raised his spacious sleeve in front of Nalan Ruoshui.

Nalan Ruoshui tugged at his sleeve, lightly dabbing her tears away. She suddenly threw herself into his bosom, bawling loudly.

"What should I do? What the hell should I do... Wuwu..."

Chen Nan was at a loss.

After Nalan Ruoshui cried for a while, her voice gradually began to

soften. Her voice seemed to be distant as she said, "If you were esteemed, if you had unrivalled power... I-I'm leaving."

## Volume 2 Chapter 6: Rosy Cheeks

[T/N: 紅顏/rosy cheeks can also mean 'beauties'.]

Watching Nalan Ruoshui's silhouette disappear out his courtyard gate, a boom reverberated through his mind.

"If I were esteemed? If I had unrivalled power? Right, either of those circumstances could change your fate."

"You're seriously an idiot. You're usually neither stupid nor foolish, but when things come to a head..." The Old Poison Devil's shining white head poked up from behind the wall.

[T/N: 事到臨頭/things come to a head; meaning 'something urgent/pressing'.]

"Fuck! Damn old man, this is the umpteenth time you've peeped on me." With that said, he grabbed a bamboo pole off the ground and hurled it to where the old man had just shown himself.

"Shit! Boy, you actually readied a bamboo pole in advance..."

"Putong!" The Old Poison Devil was hit and fell.

"Ouch... Oh God, my pitiful Xiao Lu, you've been squished dizzy again..."

"Again that toad he loves so much!" Chen Nan turned around and went

inside his house.

He didn't calm down for quite some time. His mind was filled with countless emotional thoughts. He ultimately delivered a booming fist to the small tea table. Specks of golden light shattered the small table. He decisively stood up and said to himself, "I can't watch as Nalan Ruoshui ends up as a lamb in a tiger's den. I'm forced to act!"

However, in the several days since, Chen Nan hadn't seen Nalan Ruoshui at all. She hadn't visited the Residence of Eccentrics.

Chen Nan was inwardly anxious as he sat around restlessly. The Old Poison Devil, assuming a profound look, sat on top of the wall and said, "Idiot, that day, you shouldn't have basically told her to leave by herself. Happiness is something you must strive for on your own. When it flies away, even if you want to capture it, you can't. If only you had another chance, you wouldn't have this lifelong regret! Ai, why do people only try to remedy things after they've already lost it?"

Chen Nan disregarded his nonsensical words and departed from the Residence of Eccentrics. He went to the Imperial Library's room of ancient books again, hoping to try his luck. He was hoping he'd be able to bump into Nalan Ruoshui there. But he was disappointed. The manager of the ancient book room informed him that Nalan Ruoshui hadn't visited in the past few days. Melancholic, he drew out a book from the bookshelf in passing and senselessly read it.

Suddenly, an elderly sigh sounded from behind him: "Ai!"

Chen Nan nearly jumped in surprise. He turned around and found it to

be that old man who had led him into the underground ancient tomb.

The old man's crooked body tottered as he walked to him.

Chen Nan was trembling in fear. He wasn't afraid of the old man falling over—he was deeply aware of how much overwhelming power was hidden within his old, feeble body—he was simply worried for his own life. He'd known all along that this enigmatic, dreadful old man could suddenly silence him at any point in time.

"Hehe, youngster, don't be anxious. I've already told you I hold no malice towards you. Don't brood so much over it. I truly admire you a lot. Few in years, yet your body already possesses a spiritual root, and you can draw back the sealed Houyi Bow too. Your prospects are unlimited!"

"You know of my identity?"

"Although I'm old, I'm not senile. I know a bit of all the matters in the imperial capital. It's just that I normally don't feel like caring about those mundane affairs."

Chen Nan was taken aback.

The old man said, "People only have one life! Ai, some people are destined to be nothing more than mere bystanders in your life. Along with the passing of time, these people end up growing gradually fainter until there's no trace of them remaining."

"Ah..." Chen Nan was currently truly startled. The old man's topic of

discussion harboured hidden intentions. It seemed like he was referring to the affair involving Nalan Ruoshui. He felt like his inner world was laid completely bare in front of the old man. He inwardly said, "This old man is truly an old monster, a profound mystery."

Chen Nan said, "Yes, some people are destined to be nothing more than a bystander in one's life. However, I won't watch the friends I've intersected with to suffer misfortune!"

The old man laughed, "Hehe, don't be emotional, we're just having nothing more than a casual chat."

Chen Nan was a bit apprehensive without knowing why the old man had come to find him again.

The old man abruptly asked, "Youngster, tell me, do you want to leave the Empire of Chu?"

"This..." He was utterly stunned.

"I've already told you, I admire you greatly. I really want to see what kind of level of cultivation a junior with boundless potential can clamber up to, so you don't have to be afraid. I won't harm you."

Only now did Chen Nan begin to be convinced. Regardless of what this monster's purpose was, he definitely wouldn't injure him at the present time.

The old man said, "When you've become as old as me, although you

never wholly relinquish worldly affairs, you nearly will. My mind only consists of cultivation. I only seek to transcend life and death. However, when you leave, I hope you won't cause too much of a hubbub."

Chen Nan neither nodded nor shook his head.

"There are many hidden dragons and crouching tigers in the imperial capital. Experts are aplenty. Youngster, you must by all means not act impulsively!"

As Chen Nan listened, cold sweat flowed profusely. When he finally got up to leave, he heard the old man say from behind, "Soon, I might wonder around the continent. I can't say for sure, but perhaps we'll be able to see each other again one day."

As Chen Nan was passing through the imperial garden, he stopped in his tracks. Among the greenery, hidden from view, he dimly caught sight of two familiar figures. He looked left and right and noticed no one was present, so he used his qinggong to transform his body into an inconspicuous shadow, floating in the imperial garden.

Odd rocks were scattered throughout the verdant pine, cypress, and bamboo in the garden. Century year old wisteria twisted between them, adorning the garden with exquisite lushness. The swiftly running spring water and the specks of golden scales gleaming in the small, limpid lake added a lively aura to the fresh, lush scenery.

Hidden among the bamboo was a unique, exquisite pavilion. Two beautiful silhouettes stood in the pavilion. One carried peerless and magnificent style, incomparably alluring. The other was elegant and

enlightened, remarkably delicate.

Chen Nan's heart skipped a beat. He could clearly see the appearance of the two ladies. The former was the head princess Chu Yue, while the latter was Nalan Ruoshui that he had surprisingly not seen for the past few days. He had witnessed the head princess's unordinary cultivation, so he didn't dare tread too closely, afraid of being detected. He had no alternative but to stay distant and listen intently, unmoving.

Chu Yue was holding onto Nalan Ruoshui's hand. "In fact, Sima Lingkong is already very outstanding. There aren't many youths in the imperial capital that are capable of comparing with him!"

Nalan Ruoshui was somewhat vexed. "You're actually speaking on behalf of that disciple of lust?"

"Ruoshui, you've misunderstood me. I only wish to discuss the matter as it stands. Men are all similar in manner; what man isn't fond of beauty?"

"But I truly don't hold the least bit of feeling towards him."

Chu Yue bitterly laughed. "In the eyes of commoners, we're golden branches and jade leaves. Our whole lives are filled with glory, splendour, wealth, and status, without a grievance to worry about. But is reality actually like this? I think our hearts know the answer to this. Our identities cause us to lose out on many things. For example, we cannot speak of feelings with others before marriage. This is the grievance of a woman of status."

Nalan Ruoshui quietly sighed. "What if I already have some feelings towards another?"

Chu Yue faced Nalan Ruoshui squarely. "I've already heard from others about the thing that happened at the Residence of Eccentrics that day. I've already guessed that you only took advantage of Chen Nan to reject Sima Lingkong. Don't tell me you actually hold some feelings towards him?"

When Chen Nan heard this, his heart began to beat wildly.

Nalan Ruoshui looked at Chu Yue face-to-face and said, "And if I do?"

Chu Yue was fairly startled. "How can the two of you possibly be together? Isn't this true? If we're talking about appearance, he is far from Sima Lingkong's equal. If we're talking about ability, then that's even more out of the question. His power was lost. Even you, a skilled state official, couldn't produce wonderful hands to return spring. He's already hopeless. Moreover, he's unable to start cultivating from anew. This is something you'll find difficult to hear, but he's currently already a useless person. I already don't have any hope for him."

[T/N: 妙手回春/wonderful hands to return spring; meaning 'bring the dying back to life/creator of medical miracles'.]

These words unmistakably travelled to Chen Nan's ears. Although considering it from another point of view, it was all true, Chen Nan still found it exceptionally ear-piercing.

Nalan Ruoshui turned her head to the side and said, "You don't understand...", but she didn't continue with her words.

The head princess said, "Ruoshui, you're playing with fire. It's impossible for you to be with him."

"I know, so for the past few days, I haven't visited the Residence of Eccentrics at all."

"It seems having you go to the Residence of Eccentrics to treat his illness really was a mistake. Fortunately, you haven't gone in too deep. Time can weather anything. In a short while, you'll forget about this person."

Nalan Ruoshui abruptly snapped her head back towards her. "You aren't going to kill him, right?"

A cold light flashed through Chu Yue's elegant eyes. She smiled. "Why would I do that? If it were for the sake of allowing you to forget about this experience, I'd ruthlessly kill him without mercy. But I know this kind of action wouldn't have any kind of effect; it would only make you hate me for a lifetime. Don't worry. I won't take action against him. My father's sixtieth birthday is in three days. After my father's birthday, I'll give Chen Nan an official position far away from the capital. This is what is best for you, Sima Lingkong, and Chen Nan."

Chen Nan noticed the cold light in the head princess's eyes and knew that Chu Yue was planning to kill him. In no way was she going to give him an official position away from the capital. Now that he was already a 'useless person', he didn't hold any 'value'. For the mere sake of maintaining the little princess's clear reputation, she wouldn't allow him to continue living in the world. Additionally, it benefited the affair

involving the two ministers' children.

His heart turned cold. He never thought this peerlessly magnificent head princess's scheming would actually be this profound. He never saw through this incomparably gorgeous woman's façade. It was only today when he eavesdropped on the conversation between her and Nalan Ruoshui did he become aware of how dreadful she truly was. Although thinking over it from another point of view, Chu Yue had no choice but to take behave like this. From her actions, one could pry a little bit into her stratagems.

The head princess and Nalan Ruoshui conversed for a long time. With a detached point of view, Chen Nan saw it all very clearly. Throughout the entire conversation, Chu Yue continued to put all her effort in persuading Nalan Ruoshui to marry Sima Lingkong. Inharmonious ministers are detrimental to the nation. For the sake of the nation, she was to abandon her feelings.

Chen Nan could faintly see the shadow of Tantai Xuan in Chu Yue. They were equally as beautiful, equally as intelligent, and equally as deceitful.

At last, Chu Yue said, "Let's go to my room. There's no need for us to stay here."

Nalan Ruoshui said, "No, I want to calm down a little by myself. You go back first, alright?"

Chu Yue grudgingly turned around and left.

By her lonesome, Nalan Ruoshui stood in the pavilion. She murmured, "If you were esteemed, if you had unrivalled power..." The glistening of teardrops flashed about her eyes as she left in sorrow.

Chen Nan clearly watched all of this unfold. He clenched his fists and left as well.

Arriving outside the imperial palace, he entered a palanquin. Two rows of warriors guarded him at either side as they headed towards the Residence of Eccentrics. Now that he discovered Chu Yue's dreadful scheming, he only just realized the true purpose of these warriors. One aspect of their job was to protect him. The other main aspect was to prevent him from absconding. He recalled those several formidable warriors guarding his courtyard and its surroundings. It could be said that among a hundred of Chu Yue's secrets, not a single one was divulged.

[T/N: 百密無疏/among a hundred secrets, none are divulged; based off of百密一疏/among a hundred secrets, one is divulged; meaning 'through careful consideration, a fault can be found'. In this case, Chu Yue has no faults.]

After returning to the Residence of Eccentrics, Chen Nan vaguely heard the little princess's voice.

"Poison-bobo, just give me one."

The Old Poison Devil said, "No. My darlings aren't raised for consumption. Last time, you seized Xiao Jin and Xiao Lu. I still haven't found you to settle this account, yet you actually came back again today."

"Because... I used your little snake to make something really delicious to eat. They're much tastier than ordinary snakes."

The Old Poison Devil was so furious, he was close to vomiting blood. He loudly cried out, "I'm not a breeder. My treasures aren't delicious. If you still won't leave, I'll shout for that magical researcher, that damn old woman."

"Poison-bobo, what do you think these are?"

"Ah! Firecrackers! What the hell are you doing? Don't ignite them! My darlings will be scared silly! How about I give you one small snake, okay?"

"No. Ten."

"Ah! You're killing me here. These are all rare breeds. They're all extraordinarily precious... Ah! Don't ignite them! I'll give them to you."

After a pause, the Old Poison Devil said, "Here, they're all in this bag."

"Poison-bobo, you're the best, hehe."

"Wu... You little girl, hurry up and leave."

"Hehe, see you later, Poison-bobo. You don't have to send me off. I'll be coming by regularly to see you."

The Old Poison Devil howled in grief.

...

After hearing this conversation, Chen Nan was left wide-eyed and slack-jawed. The princess actually enjoyed eating snakes. Not only that, but for the purpose of satisfying her cravings, she actually even threatened the Old Poison Devil. This truly was a little demon that was completely deserving of such a title.

After a moment, the Old Poison Devil appeared on top of the wall. With a look that told of the recent ire he had just calmed from, he said, "Just now, the endlessly evil little witch came to pass on an imperial edict. His Imperial Majesty's sixtieth birthday will be in three days. All the eccentrics of the Residence of Eccentrics have been invited to take part." After that, he changed the subject. "Reportedly, it'll be very lively. A small state will send three young dragon riders. According to some rumours, they're planning to showcase their capabilities during the banquet in front of all of the Chu Empire's young heroes."

Chen Nan asked, "What? What's that all about?"

The Old Poison Devil said, "That small state was originally a vassal state of our Chu Empire, but in recent years, their strength has gradually grown. They secretly obtained the support of a nameless power and now wish to liberate themselves from the Chu Empire's control. This time, they sent three young dragon riders as a demonstration of their military force to the Chu Empire. If the talent of these three people is greater than that of our Chu Empire's young generation, it would be tantamount to firmly whipping the hegemonic Chu Empire with a resounding slap in the face."

Chen Nan looked indifferent. "That's good. Fighting for their nation's freedom, I support these three national heroes."

The Old Poison Devil nervously looked around in all four directions. "Boy, do you not want to live? How can these words come out of your mouth? According to the secretive—but reliable—source, these three people are already remarkably famous among xiulianists of the western continent. After they suddenly vanished without a trace three years ago, I reckon for the past three years, they have been bitterly cultivating in secret constantly. In all likelihood, their current power must already be tremendous for them to be paying a visit. According to some predictions, these three are at the very minimum already at the level of second ranked xiulianists. This kind of terrifying strength is very rare among the young generation. Of the young eccentrics from the Residence of Eccentrics, I fear there is only that muscular man Sima Lingkong who is capable of serving as their opponent."

"Just now, the endlessly evil little witch said if someone had the strength to fight these three dragon riders, the emperor will confer upon them an enormous reward. If only you recovered your power. This is indeed an opportunity that is hard to come by even once! Just think! If you wielded Houyi Bow to shoot the dragons out of the sky, how splendid would that be? It'd be an act of heroism! Just thinking about it excites me. Not only would it be a like riding a labouring horse to great deeds, but your name would also move the continent. How could the emperor not attempt to entice this kind of genius to their side? Just think... Heihei."

[T/N: 汗馬功勞/riding a labouring horse to great deeds; meaning 'a heroic contribution']

The Old Poison Devil descended from the wall and went back to researching the art of poison.

Chen Nan stood in his yard. His mind didn't calm for a long time. Finally, he tightly clenched his fists and came to a decision: he would no longer conceal his formidable strength. He already knew that Nalan Ruoshui's heart accommodated his figure. However, he currently still couldn't forget about Yu Xin, nor could he begin a new relationship.

But he still held an incredibly good opinion of Nalan Ruoshui. Recalling how she would carefully help him treat his illness every day and how she had patiently taught him how to read every single character, his heart was moved. He absolutely couldn't watch blankly as Ruoshui suffered misfortune.

He pushed open the courtyard gate and said to those several warriors outside, "Please immediately report to Her Highness the head princess. Inform her I have an urgent matter I need to discuss with her."

Those warriors gave each other glances, and one of them hastily left. After about an hour, he heard the sound of the head princess greeting the eccentrics inside the residence. He knew it was at long last the time for his display.

Chen Nan entered his house and took out Houyi Bow. He lightly stroked the dark black back of the bow with his hand. Sensing the trace undulation coming from the Godly Bow, he began employing his ancestral profound skill. In a flash, great power surged out of his body. The bamboo forest in his yard followed this wave of power and violently trembled endlessly until all their foliage was knocked to the ground.

Specks of golden light and a dim golden glow suffused out from his

body. Chen Nan was brimming with tenacious self-confidence. The temperament of his entire being had changed in an instant. He was a completely different person than he was just a moment ago.

He fixed a white feathered arrow into the bowstring. His left foot was bent a step forward; his right foot back. His left hand aimed the bow towards the sky; his right hand strenuously pulled the bowstring tight. Golden light spread every which way. A thousand rays of splendid light radiated outwards. Houyi Bow emitted an endless radiance. Its sublime light eclipsed the celestial sun. Chen Nan and Houyi Bow were of the same flesh and blood; the light emanating from their beings was equally as intense.

A dense haze of light surrounded Houyi Bow. Like water, the golden light bubbled towards the white feathered arrow. The wind thundered and the world paled.

A wave of tremendous power spread out with Chen Nan at the center throughout the entire Residence of Eccentrics. All the eccentrics in the Residence of Eccentrics sensed this exceedingly powerful undulation, and everyone was completely gob smacked. With the help of Houyi Bow's power, the intense power being emitted from Chen Nan definitely reached the level of fifth ranked exceptional experts.

The head princess also sensed it. An inconceivable look appeared on her face. She asked herself, "Could it be him? How is this possible? Did he really recover?"

After his power reached its peak, Chen Nan lightly released his fingers. The white feathered arrow, like a frightening long rainbow, flickered in dazzling brilliance as it pierced the sky. The sky above the Residence of

Eccentrics thundered and quaked.

The golden, glowing arrow reached the white clouds before suddenly exploding into many fragments. An eruption of dazzling, powerful light appeared in the sky above the imperial capital. The trail the golden arrow had left behind during its ascent seemed like radiant lightning streaking from the heavens, adjoining it with the Residence of Eccentrics.

Everyone in the imperial capital could see the scene in the sky and let out alarmed cries.

The eccentrics of the Residence of Eccentrics were all left aghast. Everyone had an unfathomable expression. All the snakes, bugs, and other creatures in the Old Poison Devil's courtyard frantically ran about in chaos. The Flying Dragon in Sima Lingkong's courtyard was so scared, it shook like a leaf and curled up on the ground.

Chen Nan let out a long cry to the sky. His voice jolted the vast sky. He nocked a second white feathered arrow into the bowstring. Again, the wind thundered as another wave of incredible power surged throughout the entirety of the Residence of Eccentrics.

This time, the golden arrow was aimed at the ground. The radiance encompassed the glowing arrow. Like a golden dragon, it lacerated the surface of the earth and directly penetrated underground. Gigantic fissures half a meter wide spread out from the crater left behind by the arrow. The entire Residence of Eccentrics violently shook. One after another, the houses within the residence began to collapse. The explosive rumbling unceasingly reverberated through everyone's ears.

At this moment, everyone in a circumference of several li could feel the earth tremble. Everyone was utterly shocked.

After a long time, everything finally began to calm. Over half of the houses in the Residence of Eccentrics had crumbled. Everyone standing among the ruins were frightened wide-eyed and slack-jawed. Finally, everyone's sights focused on Chen Nan.

This formerly ordinary youth seemed to have discarded his body and exchanged his bones. Currently, he was emanating a great, palpitating, imposing manner. Everyone couldn't help but begin to revere him in their hearts.

The Old Poison Devil was the first to awaken from his stupor. He was unable to contain his miserable bawling: "Oh God! My darlings! Wu... Who did I provoke to incur this wrath? I've already been unfortunate enough to be near that damn old woman who blows up her house all day long; I didn't think the other seemingly honest, private guy would be even more heinous to actually destroy the entire residence! Wu... Darlings..."

Sima Lingkong looked beyond ashen. His Flying Dragon had been smashed and injured: its right wing's flesh was left in a disgustingly bloody state. When he saw that the criminal mastermind, the bringer of calamity, was actually Chen Nan, fury swelled in his heart. At the same time, he was even more astonished. He was envious of Chen Nan's tyrannical power.

A bright light flashed through Chu Yue's eyes. She pondered over something at first, but afterwards, she was delighted. Today, she was able to see the might of Houyi Bow with her own two eyes. Its tremendous

power had stunned her very being. This power—which was not one whit inferior to that of fifth ranked experts—meant the Empire of Chu had just undoubtedly gained another exceptional expert.

As the Old Poison Devil was crying and cursing, rubble could be seen atop of the Old Witch's head as she crawled her way out of the ruins of her house.

"Which bastard destroyed my house? How audacious to plot against me like this. Absolutely ridiculous. If you have the ability, come have a decisive one-on-one battle with me." With that said, the Old Witch floated into the air. When she was able to clearly see the scene before her, she all of the sudden dropped from the sky.

"Heavens! This is even greater than what a fifth ranked Magic Daoshi can achieve! How terribly frightening."

A copious amount of troops had rushed here. For a moment, the Residence of Eccentrics was in utter disarray.

Chu Yue promptly relayed the information to the troops and ordered them to blockade the place. After that, she dispatched men to arrange brand new residences for every eccentric.

After completely handling all the problems in front of her, Chu Yue brought Chen Nan to the imperial palace. In a private room, she asked him to detail all the events that had just conspired.

"Chen Nan, have you recovered your power?"

"Yes, it's been recovered in full."

"That's great! My Empire of Chu has gained yet another remarkable eccentric. Is this the matter you called me for?"

"Yes, I wished to tell the princess this good news."

"Why did you shoot two arrows with Houyi Bow? Not only did you attract the amazement of everyone in the imperial capital, but you also destroyed the Residence of Eccentrics." When her words reached this point, an unhappy look appeared on Chu Yue's face.

Chen Nan sneered in his heart. He had already prepared a lie. "After I recovered my power, the vital qi within my body began to constantly expand until I lost control and only wanted to unleash it, so I used Houyi Bow. The first arrow was shot into the sky resulting in a unique, brilliant view. I feared this would cause unnecessary trouble, so the second arrow was shot underground. I didn't expect the might of the golden arrow to actually be this great for it to actually destroy half of the Residence of Eccentrics. Princess, please punish me."

Chu Yue's unhappy expression faded. She smiled as she said, "A residence isn't much anyway. As long as you recovered your power, even if you destroyed the place again, it wouldn't be a problem."

After the inquiry, Chu Yue reiterated to him the matter involving the three dragon riders. He needed to begin his preparations. In three days' time, if no one else was capable of matching those three people, then he would be needed to go up onto the stage wielding Houyi Bow.

After Chen Nan listened to this, he asked, "If we do this, won't my secret state official status go from secret to public? Wouldn't everybody know?"

Chu Yue replied, "We only needed to keep you as a secret state official before because we were in need of concealing your strength so no one would be on guard against you. This is the time for your secret to become public. You must demonstrate the might of my Chu Empire."

Chu Yue and Chen Nan conversed for a very long time. The atmosphere was much more jovial than before.

Chen Nan secretly gave an icy laugh in his head. Finally, he stood up and bowed to Chu Yue. "There's this matter in which I politely ask for the princess's assistance."

"Oh? What is it?"

"I want to take Nalan Ruoshui as my wife. Can the princess please assist me with this?" Chen Nan didn't have any other better plans but to push himself forward onto the stage and directly compete with Sima Lingkong. So long as he was able to temporarily prevent the Sima Family from requesting marriage, all the matters afterward would be much simpler to handle.

"This..." Chu Yue crumpled her refined eyebrows. She found this a bit difficult to handle. If Chen Nan had put forward this kind of request in the past, she wouldn't even need to think about it before immediately firmly refusing him. But the present couldn't be compared with the past. Now, Chen Nan wielding Houyi Bow was equivalent to a fifth ranked

exceptional expert. Furthermore, it was expected that in three days' time, his name would move the world.

As for this genius, she could only inveigle and placate him. But if Nalan Ruoshui was really married to Chen Nan, it would undoubtedly offend the greatly influential Sima Family. This was a complex problem for her to solve.

"Great General Sima is currently using his eldest son to raise the topic of marriage. He has already requested my father the emperor's blessing, but he hasn't decided yet. I'll report your request to my father and ask him to make a decision."

## Volume 2 Chapter 7: Great Battle at the Imperial Palace

Although Chen Nan didn't receive a definite answer, the nature of the matter already improved. Now that his 'value' was about the same as that of the Sima Family, the emperor was forced to keep him close and wouldn't easily offend him.

After he left the imperial palace, his mood was much happier than before.

Upon arriving at the new Residence of Eccentrics, he instantly saw the two blood-red eyes of the Old Poison Devil. The old man was staring ferociously at him like a wolf.

Chen Nan grew cold. He turned around to flee.

"You goddamn boy, stand still for me. You destroyed the Residence of Eccentrics and scared away all of my darlings... I need to poison you ten thousand times!"

"Take this! Decaying Corpse Poison, Red-Crowned Crane Skull Extract, Heartbroken Grass... Bone-Transforming Pellets, Seven Step Soul Breaking Powder~!" With trembling hands, the Old Poison Devil threw a bunch of poison at Chen Nan. Every bag of poisonous powder burst near his body, enveloping his whole body in a vast fog of poison.

Chen Nan loudly cried out, "Perverted old man, are you playing seriously? Hurry and give me the antidote, I can't—" Right when he opened his mouth, the poisonous air was vacuumed into his mouth and

nostrils. He sensed himself grow groggy.

"I've said before, I need to poison you ten thousand times! Die, then I'll resurrect you; live, so I can poison you to death again~!"

Chen Nan didn't dare open his mouth to speak. With all his strength, he put his ancestral profound skill to use. Specks of golden light and a faint golden glow suffused from his body. A thin, golden halo emerged from the surface of his body, obstructing the poisonous fog from getting close. Simultaneously, he hurriedly circulated his inner vital qi over and over again throughout all of his blood vessels. He began to force the bit of poisonous fog that he had inhaled out of his body.

After seeing Chen Nan not collapse after so much time had passed, the Old Poison Devil began concocting poisons with even greater toxicity. Twenty or so bags of poison simultaneously flew from his hands. The vapour even spread to the entrance of the Residence of Eccentrics. The warriors standing guard were so frightened, they avoided it from a great distance.

The news of this event attracted many eccentrics to come watch. When two people accidentally breathed in the diffusing poisonous gas and collapsed on the spot, the Old Poison Devil threw them several bags of antidote, allowing the two of them to free themselves from the verge of death.

The majority of these eccentrics were xiulianists with profound cultivation. With one glance, they could see that Chen Nan had already successfully obstructed the poisonous gas from coming close to his body. They were deeply shocked by his consummate skill.

Step by step, Chen Nan penetrated through the area of poisonous fog and walked towards the Old Poison Devil.

"Perverted old man, are you finished yet? Do you want to keep playing?" With that said, he clenched his fists, deliberately cracking his knuckles loudly.

The Old Poison Devil's expression drastically changed. He ultimately wailed, "It doesn't make any sense! Just a few days ago, you looked like he couldn't even resist the wind. Now you've unexpectedly become abnormally strong, even unafraid of poison. I'll poison you, I'll keep poisoning you... I'll poison you ten thousand times!"

Bag after bag of poisonous powder once again exploded in Chen Nan's vicinity again. The eccentrics watching all retreated.

Chen Nan never expected that after his ancestral profound skill had entered the third Chongtian, he'd actually be capable of resisting poison. This accidental discovery left him pleasantly surprised. He once again made his way through the area of the poisonous fog and gave the Old Poison Devil a toothy grin. With his right hand, he pointed underneath the old man's foot. Sword qi shot out from his finger and pierced the marble underneath the Old Poison Devil's foot.

The Old Poison Devil jumped back in fear, quickly retreating.

Many of the distant eccentric onlookers were martial artists with profound cultivation. After they saw that luminous sword qi, they all looked utterly astounded. They were incapable of conceiving that this

young junior was actually a third ranked martial artist who had attained the level of Sword Qi Beyond the Body. He wasn't any bit inferior to those xiulianists who were already decades of years old.

Sima Lingkong's eyes emitted a jealous, resentful brilliance. He clenched his fists, itching to immediately rush up and beat that formally incomparably ordinary guy.

"Goddamn boy, don't come over here..." The Old Poison Devil continuously stepped back.

Chen Nan advanced forward and grabbed onto his arm. "Perverted old man, do you still want to play?

Seeing the dimly glowing golden halo surrounding Chen Nan's body, the old man promptly shook his head and said, "Not playing anymore. How can I have such bad luck? All my neighbours are competing with each other in being abnormal, competing with each other in being crazy..."

Chen Nan said with a low voice, "Don't complain, I have something to give you. You'll certainly be happy."

With a crestfallen and forlorn look, The Old Poison Devil said, "What lousy thing? I'm not interested in martial arts; as long as I have the skill to defend myself, I'm content."

"Poison Scriptures."

"What?!" The Old Poison Devil shouted, "Really?"

"Of course really. I originally wanted to give them to you when I left the Residence of Eccentrics, but seeing your look as if you wanted to eat me, I'd better give it to you as soon as possible."

The Old Poison Devil grabbed Chen Nan and ran back to his courtyard. After closing the courtyard gate firmly, he impatiently asked, "Where are the Poison Scriptures?"

From his bosom, Chen Nan fished out a scroll of creased, coarse paper. "Here, for you."

All of the sudden, the Poison Devil jumped up into the air and said, "Goddamn disgraceful boy, you even made me happy for a second. Bringing some straw paper to deceive me..."

Chen Nan placed that paper into the old man's hands. "Whether or not you believe is your prerogative."

With a suspicious look, the Old Poison Devil unrolled the paper scroll and examined it slowly. The more he read, the more excited he became. Finally, he couldn't help but yell out, "They're really the Poison Scriptures! This is great!" He quickly turned the pages of the paper. When he reached the final page, he cried out, "Why does it seem like there's a few pages missing?"

Chen Nan scratched his head. "Last time I went to the toilet, I think I used three pages."

"You..." The Old Poison Devil basically vomited blood immediately upon hearing those words. He pointed at Chen Nan and said, "You... actually used the Poison Scriptures as toilet paper? My God! Sacred Poison Ancestors, poison this boy ten thousand times to death!"

"Perverted old man, are you sure you're not making a mistake? It was I who gave the Poison Scriptures to you, yet you're actually cursing me like this..."

With a bitter face, the old man said, "Who made you 'vandalize' the last three pages of the Poison Scriptures? Do you still remember the content written on those pages?"

"En, they left a little impression on me. I suppose if I were to go to the toilet again, I'd remember it all."

"You..." The Old Poison Devil looked like he had died from anger.

"Perverted old man, look at the bitter look on your face. In truth, the last three pages didn't have much content, so listen carefully..."

The Old Poison Devil was jubilant upon hearing this surprising news. With full attention, he memorized everything Chen Nan said.

"Alright, remember it all. When the time comes, don't coming looking for me on the toilet to ask me again."

The Old Poison Devil scowled. "You disgraceful boy, how the hell did you obtain this book? Was it during those days you were at the Imperial Library room of ancient texts? Is that where you found it?"

"That's right."

"I don't know how to thank you. To me, this book is truly incredibly significant. En, I'll write off how you scared away all of my darlings then."

"Aren't you a bit too petty?"

The Old Poison Devil said, "Just now I heard you say you originally planned to give these Poison Scriptures to me when you leave. Don't tell me you want to leave?"

Chen Nan said, "In the Residence of Eccentrics, the only person I am friendly with is you, and the only person I trust is you, so I didn't want to force you into keeping my secret. Sooner or later, I'll be leaving. Please keep this a secret."

The Old Poison Devil nodded. "I already knew you'd be leaving. Will you be waiting until after you marry cool water before leaving? After you leave, you mustn't forget about my old self."

"You damn perverted old man. Don't worry, every time I go to the toilet, I'll always think of you..." Chen Nan laughed as he took great strides away.

Three days later, the sixtieth birthday of Chu Han, the Emperor of Chu, was ceremoniously held at the imperial palace. Civil and military officials

already went to congratulate him. The rare, precious objects—the presents—were stacked up like a mountain. Naturally, the most dazzling present was the princess's sparkling petal from the radiant Blazing Inferno Immortal Lotus. Its sweet fragrance seeped deeply into everyone's hearts.

In the splendidly golden and jade main hall of the imperial palace, songs were being sung and dances were being danced in celebration of the peace and prosperity of the country. Along with the melodious playing of string and wind instruments, all the officials sung the emperor's praises. Words of praise could constantly be heard. After Chu Han received all of his subjects' respectful congratulations, he ordered the feast to begin. In a short while, the hall was filled with drinking and gambling intermixed. The fragrance of wine flooded everyone's nostrils.

Although not all the presents sent by everyone from the Residence of Eccentrics were rare objects, they were still classified as special guests; their arranged seating was not too far away from the emperor. They were of equal footing with the major court officials. Everyone toasted one another. The strong smell of alcoholic was unmistakable.

The great hall was filled with festive activities. There was endless singing and dancing and music drifted in the air. The ruler and his ministers drank and chatted joyfully.

After three rounds of wine and five flavours of dishes, the matter that everyone had been anticipating finally arrived. One person stood up from the banquet, bowed to Chu Han, and said, "Your Majesty Emperor Chu, do you not reckon this singing and dancing to be too weak? The Great Chu is grand; its territory stretches countless li. The founding emperor used military force to begin this empire. Could it be that after the younger generation of royalty idly sat and defended their ten thousand li

of rivers and mountains, they only know how to enjoy decadent music?"

These words could be said to be utmost rude. Every single cabinet minister's face changed colour. They all angrily denounced these words in succession.

"You are the envoy from the vassal state of Tianyang? You're rather brave. How rudely brazen!"

"Little State of Tianyang's envoy, to actually rudely talk to your ruling empire's emperor like this, could it be that you wish to revolt?"

"Audacious! Is your State of Tianyang planning to conspire against the law?"

...

The envoy from the State of Tianyang was neither nervous nor hurried. "Small official truly never intended to offend the emperor. I simply wish to invite His Imperial Majesty to enjoy some demonstrations from agile and brave martial artists."

The Emperor of Chu laughed. "Good, I have heard a few days earlier that the State of Tianyang is flush with experts. Although their territory is small, their population of exceptional experts is no less than that of a major power. Today, please allow us to expand our horizons."

With a gesture from Chu Han, the female singers, dancers, and musicians all withdrew.

In a moment, three people entered the hall from outside. Each of the three appeared to be about twenty years old. Every one of them had incomparably tall, lofty builds. Muscles rippled down their bodies like dragons. They were brimming with explosive power.

The three of them bowed to Chu Han. One of them said, "We wish to spar in martial arts. There is no meaning behind this; we merely wish to invite the young heroes from the Empire of Chu to exchange pointers."

One of the ministers from the Empire of Chu said, "Are you publicly challenging us? Do you desire to compete with one of my Great Chu's heroes?"

One of the three said, "If your distinguished self considers it to be like this, then we mustn't."

At this time, the head princess Chu Yue began to speak: "If you wish to experience the talent of our Empire of Chu's youthful xiulianists, I can give you a worthy answer. We accept your challenge."

The three people were delighted.

"The three of us are dragon riders. We possess our own dragons, so it's not possible to compete within this imperial hall."

Just then, Chu Han replied, "Then we can go to the imperial palace's martial arts practice arena. I did not expect my birthday to be this marvelous. To actually be able to view a dragon rider compete with

someone, hehe..." Chu Han carried a faint smile on his face, as if he could already see those three dragon riders suffering a crushing defeat. Indeed, with Chen Nan who was capable of drawing back Houyi Bow, he wasn't one bit anxious.

However, the happiest person present was actually the little princess. She was the first to jump up. "Great! At last, I can finally see some stupid dragons fly and fight in the sky, hehe~!"

All the court ministers heard this and looked at each other in dismay.

The empress got a hold of the princess and flicked her forehead, saying, "You little mischievous girl, you really are only fearful of the world lacking chaos! You...!"

The princess gleefully giggled.

The civil and military officials accompanied the emperor to the imperial palace's practice arena. Chu Han sat at the center of a viewing terrace. The empress sat beside him. At either side of the two were the several princes and the two princesses. All the ministers sat at a lower platform below.

One of the three dragon riders walked to the center of the arena. He faced the sky and let out a long cry. His voice seemed to surge like lightning as it shot into the distance. Shortly, a black dot appeared in the distant sky. As the black dot grew larger and larger, a six or seven zhang long Flying Dragon arrived overhead the practice arena. It endlessly circled around in the sky.

The dragon rider gestured towards the sky. The Flying Dragon directly descended, landing at his side. With its descent, a fierce wind erupted, causing several civil officials to cry out fearfully.

The dragon rider quickly leapt on top of the dragon's back. He said to everyone watching, "Before we begin, there is something I must first explain. The three of us cannot continuously keep battling. Therefore, the Empire of Chu can only select a few delegates; at most, nine. Each one of us can receive three opponents, but each battle must be one-on-one."

This dragon rider was awfully conceited. His words implied that three heroes from the Empire of Chu could not even rival a single dragon rider from the State of Tianyang. Immediately, many angry rebukes arose from the crowd.

All the members of the Residence of Eccentrics sat together. The Old Poison Devil quietly said, "He's wild enough, but he has the ability to act wild." He turned his head and said to Chen Nan, "Do you understand? Although the State of Tianyang is small, it has numerous xiulianists. The number of profound xiulianists from their nation is no fewer than our Chu Empire. Because of this, the experts originating from this nation absolutely cannot be underestimated."

Chen Nan nodded. He long since sensed the formidable power emanating from the three of them. All of them had already reached the level of second ranked xiulianists. But among the three of them, the one who had not said a word was the one who he took particular note of. He sensed that person was on the verge of becoming a third ranked xiulianist. He was a genuine powerful opponent.

Chu Yue said, "Nine people are not necessary; three is enough." She

turned her head, faced all the onlookers, and asked, "Who wishes to have a taste of these three dragon riders?"

The young experts in the army successively stood up, wishing to battle the dragon riders.

As for the eccentrics of the Residence of Eccentrics, not many volunteered themselves. Few of them were young enough to participate.

The candidates were chosen; all were members of the Residence of Eccentrics. The first candidate was a young Intermediate Magus. His strength was already of the level of a second ranked xiulianist. The second candidate was Sima Lingkong. His injured Flying Dragon had already received treatment from the Old Witch's holy light. The third candidate was Chen Nan. He never volunteered himself; the head princess had selected him.

The magus was the first to take part in battle. He lightly hovered from the viewing platform over to the center of the arena.

The dragon rider laughed. "Magi are few in number; they're not something you see every day. I didn't expect to be fortunate enough to battle with a magus of the second rank today. I'm truly honoured!"

The magus said, "Well said, but dragon riders are an even rarer species. It's truly strange to be able to suddenly see three dragons today!"

The dragon rider coldly laughed, "Heihei, it appears that dragon riders are a magus's nemesis. Today, you'll definitely die!"

The magus laughed. "Beat me? Keep talking bullshit."

The two of them mutually faced each other with needles and spears. Their mouths were ruthless.

[T/N: 針鋒相對/mutually face each other with needles and spears; meaning 'oppose each other with equal harshness'.]

The dragon rider gripped a Dragon Slaughtering Lance. Patting his dragon's head, the Flying Dragon soared into the sky.

"Weak magus, make your move."

The magus wielded a magic wand. Softly casting aloud a spell, the magic wand scattered. Like a bolt of lightning, it streaked towards the dragon rider. The intense electric current's 'bilipala' crackling incessantly sounded.

The Flying Dragon didn't wait for its master's command as it quickly dodged to the side in a flash. The entire lightning bolt streaked into the ground, gouging a deep, sizeable crater.

The Flying Dragon brought about a fierce wind as it surged towards the magus. The magus swiftly drifted into the sky. With another brandish of his magic wand, ten spears of ice appeared. With an ear-splitting roar, they pierced towards the sky. Twinkling with a thick, cold light, they shot towards the dragon rider.

The dragon rider already didn't have ample time to dodge. With the

Dragon Slaughtering Lance, scarlet battle qi was emitted from the lance's point and shot towards the ice spears, shattering each and every one. They all dropped to the ground. Subsequently, he urged his Flying Dragon to once again ram the magus. At the same time, the Dragon Slaughtering Lance trembled. Like the blade of a sword, battle qi shot towards the magus with a 'chichi'.

The magus immediately evaded while simultaneously incanting a spell. He produced an aqua blue magical screen to protect himself. But the dragon rider's battle qi was abnormally powerful. As if it possessed unstoppable power, several cracks streaked across the magical screen, causing the magus to cry out fearfully.

The dragon rider laughed out loud. "I told you didn't I? Dragon riders are a magus's nemesis. You're dead." The Flying Dragon continued to pursue and attack the magus in the sky.

A sneer appeared at the edge of the magus's mouth. The instant the magical screen disintegrated, he lightly brandished the magic wand. A vast blade of wind coldly flickered like ice as it shot towards the Flying Dragon. Following closely behind it was a tremendous bolt of lightning. The air was filled with violent waves of magical energy.

The dragon rider's expression took a turn. In a hurry, a dazzling, powerful light erupted from his body. Scarlet battle qi obstructed the blade of wind and the bolt of lightning, but it only endured for a short moment. The battle qi's brilliance gradually dimmed.

The court officials from the Empire of Chu successively showed cheerful expressions, but the eccentrics with profound cultivation from the Residence of Eccentrics didn't look the slightest bit happy.

This was the the first time Chen Nan witnessed a fight between a dragon rider and a magus. He found this type of battle in the sky to be rather novel. He inwardly thought, "What level do martial artists have to reach before they are capable of using their own power to fly?"

Suddenly, the situation in the sky took a turn. The clothes on the dragon rider's body suddenly blew apart. Every strand of his long hair was erect. Like raging flames, scarlet battle qi raged out from his body.

"Weak magus, die!"

Scarlet battle qi shielded the dragon rider and his Flying Dragon as they rushed forward. Every single blade of wind slid off to the sides. The energy remaining in the bolt of lightning was also currently being diminished. With another 'bilipala' crackle, it vanished.

The magus was utterly stunned. He already didn't have enough time to dodge. He hurried to cast another magical screen, but under the dragon rider's powerful attack, it was no use. It shattered in the blink of an eye. The magus was rammed by the Flying Dragon's gigantic body. With a miserable shriek, he fell head first to the ground. A splattering of his blood remained in the air.

All the onlookers cried out in surprise. The medical staff hastily ran to the arena. After a careful examination, they found the magus's sternum completely shattered. He was already dead.

The dragon rider let out a long cry to the sky. His Flying Dragon followed suit with a howl and a triumphant flip in the sky, although the

maneuver didn't look too mighty.

## Volume 2 Chapter 8: Shooting Down Heavenly Dragons

No one expected the formidable magus to be defeated in the blink of an eye. The dragon rider's martial glory shone as he displayed his valour in the sky. The faces of the Emperor of Chu and his ministers all turned remarkably hideous.

At the moment, perhaps only the Little Princess was still smiling. She gazed at the Flying Dragon in the sky and muttered, "I never thought that ugly thing would actually be this awesome. If I had one of those mounts, that'd be great. I'd be able to fly anywhere I want. Ai, but I'm afraid this dragon is out of luck. When it's that degenerate Chen Nan's turn to go up on stage, it'll definitely be shot down with just a single arrow."

Remembering that Chen Nan had recovered his power, the princess's mood was strangely complex. At the start, it could be said that she hadn't held any good opinions of Chen Nan whatsoever. Later, she had sapped him of all his power until there was none remaining. It was only then did she begin to feel a bit of guilt in her heart. But the instant she recalled how Chen Nan had captured her and the events that unfolded as a result, she turned resentful and too ashamed to show herself.

"That hateful, smelly thief, sooner or later, I'll properly put you in your place. Don't believe I've forgotten about all those past affairs."

If Chen Nan knew the princess was planning on going after him again, he wouldn't know what to think of it.

The empress asked, "Yu'er, what are you muttering about?"

"Oh, nothing."

At the moment, Sima Lingkong had already mounted his Flying Dragon and had flown to the arena from the imperial palace. Everyone watching in the crowd cheered. Sima Lingkong was extremely happy in his heart. He felt like he was similar to the embodiment of an exceptional hero pulling strongly against the crazy tide to save the desperate, lost crisis.

He carefully scanned the crowd and finally found Nalan Ruoshui, but he was disappointed. Nalan Ruoshui was basically not looking at him. This made him incredibly angered. He turned his head again and looked towards Chen Nan. Chen Nan currently had on his face a smile that wasn't a smile as he looked back at him. The fury in his heart began to boil turbulently. He hated not being able to immediately smash that guy into pieces for making him feeling utterly disgusted.

In the sky, two dragon riders faced each other from afar. Their Flying Dragons were viciously staring at their counterpart.

Suddenly, a long cry roared from the ground to the clouds. Another Flying Dragon could be heard flying towards them from the distance. The Flying Dragon circled the practice arena once before landing on the ground. Another dragon rider from the State of Tianyang leapt on top of his Flying Dragon and soared into the sky.

"Younger apprentice brother, go take a rest. Let me handle this person."

"Second apprentice brother, I'm not tired. Let me finish this guy before I rest."

"That won't do. Immediately go down and rest. This one is mine."

Sima Lingkong quickly turned his nose up at this in anger. These two people actually regarded him as nothing. They were not worried about him at all. He loudly intervened, "Are the two of you finished being long-winded? Which one of you is coming to taste death first?"

The dragon rider that had just finished his battle with the magus turned and gave him a glance. Afterwards, he turned his head back to that other dragon rider and said, "Second apprentice brother, I'll let you have this one. Make sure you lay waste to his dragon, too." With that said, he rode his Flying Dragon to the ground.

Sima Lingkong nearly blew up in rage. With a sneer, he said, "Let's see who ends up as waste!"

The weapons of both dragon riders in the sky were western giant swords that were both long and broad. The eerie, cold flickering of light from the blades intimidated one's very soul.

"Kill!"

"Kill!"

Simultaneously, the two of them propelled their Flying Dragons soaring forward. The two Flying Dragons blew up a fierce gale as they flew at one another. Battle qi from both dragon riders excited their respective giant swords. With the boost from the splendid, bright battle qi, the swords

resembled lightning. A low rumble resounded through the sky.

The ministers of the Chu court watching the battle were all on the edges of their seats, as if they were the ones who were currently battling.

After the battle qi collided in the sky, a dazzling brilliance exploded out. An intense wave of energy erupted from the collision.

The two Flying Dragons endured the wave of energy. They flew past each other a few times before flying back to their respective sides.

The chests of Sima Lingkong and the other dragon rider were heaving up and down. There was not much of a discrepancy in power between the initial attacks from both parties. Their strength was more or less equal.

Again, they propelled their Flying Dragons forward. Battle qi raged haphazardly in the sky. The two of them battled fiercely.

The practitioners with profound cultivation of the Residence of Eccentrics all began discussing the brawl with one another. Someone sighed, "Dragon riders are indeed incomparably powerful. With the support of a dragon's might, they're like tigers that sprouted wings. They possess great offensive strength, and they're capable of flight. The strength of dragon riders is much more tyrannical than other practitioners of equal rank."

Everyone nodded in agreement.

Meanwhile, the battle in the sky was turning blazingly intense. The Flying Dragons snarled, the battle qi raged in the sky, and the practice arena was filled with brilliant flashes of light. Battle qi was violently launched in every direction in the sky.

Sima Lingkong's emerald battle qi faced off against the Tianyang dragon rider's blue battle qi. Endless 'chichi' sounds erupted as their fierce strikes cleaved through the air.

The Emperor of Chu sighed in praise, "What a great battle. It has already been a long time since I've seen ranked experts battle. Not only that, but this is a battle between dragon riders. It is indeed marvelous. Dragon riders are worthy of being called the fighters of practitioners."

The empress nodded in agreement. "Yes, dragon riders really are incomparably tyrannical. They're much more suited for battle than other practitioners."

The several princes and two princesses were also on the edges of their seats. In particular was the Little Princess. Her hands and feet were dancing in excitement. If not for Chu Yue holding onto her, perhaps she may have even fallen off the viewing terrace.

Under the violent attacks of battle qi, the clothing of both dragon riders were shredded into pieces, exposing their muscular builds. Under the effect of battle qi, the giant swords in their hands were even more magnificent. Accompanied by the low sound of thundering wind, there appeared to be a wild dance of lightning in the sky.

Sima Lingkong suddenly roared wildly. Man and dragon transformed

into a green arrow as they shot towards the Tianyang dragon rider. Not to be outdone, the Tianyang dragon rider let out a long cry to the sky and willed his Flying Dragon onward to meet Sima Lingkong head on.

All the onlookers watching the battle became impassioned with boiling blood at the scene. They all got up to their feet. Everyone knew that the final confrontation was approaching.

Shining brilliance erupted from the dragon riders' entire bodies. Like two balls of torrential flames, the giant swords hacked down at one another with resplendent battle qi. The blades collided.

"Honglonglong!"

With an accompanying rumble of thunder, a ball of dazzling radiance, like the sun, exploded in midair. An incredible wave of energy left the hearts of all the onlookers pounding in fear.

The two Flying Dragons wailed. Their bodies were littered with many great wounds. Watery blood continuously rained down. Ultimately, after a bit of swaying, they fell from the sky.

The two dragon riders mounted atop the Flying Dragons had already become bloody men. Their giant swords had already snapped into fragments. Their hands gripped the remaining halves of their respective swords. They both suffered major injuries and were equally too powerless to continue battling. With a mutual glance at one another, they finally fainted on top of their dragons' backs. The Flying Dragons also fell towards the ground.

"Hong!"

"Hong!"

The two Flying Dragons hit the floor.

This battle had been incomparably desperate. Both dragon riders and their Flying Dragons were equally too injured to stand up again. It was judged to be a draw.

One loss and one draw. From the point of view of the Empire of Chu, the situation wasn't looking too optimistic.

The State of Tianyang still had two dragon riders remaining, while the Empire of Chu now only had Chen Nan.

Carrying Houyi Bow on his back, Chen Nan advanced towards the arena. He found Nalan Ruoshui within the crowd. A look of concern covered her face, warming Chen Nan's heart.

The Old Poison Devil yelled from behind him, "Be careful!"

The Old Witch also yelled, "Youngster, land the finishing blow early!"

One after another, everyone from the Residence of Eccentrics encouraged him as he advanced forward.

Chen Nan was dressed in the manner of an eastern martial artist. His outward appearance was seemingly quite ordinary. He didn't have a very sturdy or robust physique, nor did he have a lofty stature. This left the civil and military officials very disappointed. They had thought that if Chen Nan were a powerful dragon rider, or possibly even a mysterious Daoist, then perhaps there would still be hope for a victory in this competition. The court ministers of Chu had already lost confidence in him. They really weren't too optimistic as the battle was about to begin.

With great strides, Chen Nan walked to the center of the arena.

After the dragon rider who had yet to battle took a look at him, his eyes emitted a cold light. He began having misgivings, because he was unable to see how profound Chen Nan's cultivation was.

The dragon rider who had battled in the first bout said, "Eldest apprentice brother, you better let me take this one. This man isn't even worthy of sparring with you."

The dragon rider who was the so-called eldest apprentice brother gave Chen Nan another look, and then nodded his head.

The dragon rider rode his Flying Dragon into the sky, arriving overhead Chen Nan.

"Haha! Could it be that the Empire of Chu has run out of fighters and is resigned to send you up onto the stage? Do you think you can rely on your eastern martial skills to win a victory over me, a dragon rider? Haha!" The dragon rider laughed wildly.

Chen Nan calmly said, "That's right. Eastern martial study has gradually declined in recent years, but you best not insult the prodigy my ancestors have left behind. Eastern martial study is extensive and profound. The reason it has declined is because the later generations have failed to comprehend its essence. If all its practitioners were remarkable geniuses, battle qi and magic would find it extremely difficult to strive in the face of such fierce opposition. Today, I'll have you experience the true meaning of eastern martial arts. On behalf of my martial ancestors, I'll teach you a lesson, you unworthy child who has forgotten your own origins."

In the sky, the dragon rider's face turned red in anger. He furiously said, "Boy, it isn't your turn to teach me a lesson. If you do not lose your life under my Dragon Slaughtering Lance within ten moves, this match will be considered my loss!"

Chen Nan said, "Fine, I'll also use a spear to accompany you."

He walked over to the nearby weapons rack and collected a long spear forged from steel essence. With a light shake of his hands, he demonstrated ten spear tricks.

Up in the viewing terrace, the Emperor of Chu asked Chu Yue who was at his side, "What the hell is he doing? Why is he still carrying Houyi Bow on his back? Does he wish to use a spear to duel the dragon rider?"

Chu Yue furrowed her elegant eyebrows and said, "I also cannot tell what he's doing."

At the side, the Little Princess said, "Isn't this guy's martial arts as crappy as possible? Isn't he just going off to his death?"

Just then, the dragon rider yelled out, "Boy, are you ready?"

With the long spear in his hands, Chen Nan walked over to the center of the arena. In a split second, the tremendous power within his body violently surged out. A faint golden glow surrounded his body. With every step he took, the practice arena would slightly quake.

The dragon rider turned pale in fright. At this moment, he was finally able to sense the incredible power within Chen Nan's body.

Everyone watching also found that Chen Nan had undergone a transformation.

The Little Princess was the first to cry out, "Holy! How did this degenerate transform into someone else? When did he become this awesome? Aiyah, I better not bother him anymore."

A bright light flashed through Chu Yue's eyes as she smiled. "It seems a pleasant surprise will occur today!"

Chen Nan seemed like a monstrous mountain. The earth lightly quaked with every step he took. His formidable imposing manner even made the Flying Dragon that was up in the sky feel a sense of uneasiness, repeatedly letting out whines. When Chen Nan arrived at the center of the arena, he pointed the spear squarely at the Dragon Rider. "Come, I need to show you the true essence of eastern martial arts!"

The dragon rider was furious. Wielding the Dragon Slaughtering Lance,

he dove straight down. A violent wind blew up the sand off the arena's ground. With only one hand holding onto the spear, Chen Nan titled it towards the sky, standing calmly in the middle of the sandstorm.

"Boy, die!" The dragon rider's Dragon Slaughtering Lance shot out ten spears of light in quick thrusts in blinding succession. The bright spears of light directly shot at Chen Nan.

Chen Nan wasn't the least bit rushed. The long spear in his hand lightly trembled. The length of the spear suffused a splendid golden light. It seemed to combust into raging flames. The spearhead seemed to suffuse a tangible blade of light. This blade of light was brilliantly splendid. An indeterminate number of cold strikes flashed out towards its opponent. Watching the splendidly dazzling battle qi and the violently moving Flying Dragon soaring towards him, he shouted, "Spear of the Hegemonic God!"

In the air, the long spear transformed into ten spear images. Every spear image transformed into a spear made of light rising up. The sound of the air splitting, 'chichi', tore through the air incessantly.

Every single person watching displayed astounded expressions. Cries of surprise immediately began erupting from the crowd.

"Heavens! It's really a spear made out of light!"

"This is the sword qi of eastern martial artists!"

"He's truly reached the level of Sword Qi Beyond the Body!"

“Only eastern martial artists who have reached the third rank can do something like this!”

...

At this instant, Chen Nan truly appeared like an unrivalled hegemon. He was domineering and made others revere him. The spear struck the sky. With one strike by the golden spear of light, the flying battle qi was scattered. The nub of the spear of light was directly aimed at the Flying Dragon.

The dragon rider turned pale in fright. He urgently tried to stop his Flying Dragon’s downward descent, quickly dodging to the side.

The golden spear brushed past the Flying Dragon, ripping open its steel-hard draconic scales. A faint, bloody scar was left on the Flying Dragon’s flank.

The Flying Dragon let out a terrible wail. Ignoring its rider’s commands, it flew back into the sky disobediently.

Outside the arena, cheers of joy thundered. Everyone was excited. From the beginning when the magus had fought up until now, this was the first time the Empire of Chu was winning.

Seeing the raving crowd and that lonesome figure holding the spear standing in the middle of the arena below him, the dragon rider grew furious. Even with the aid of the Flying Dragon’s power, he was actually

pushed back by a single spear strike. He felt like he had received the greatest insult. Again, he willed the Flying Dragon to dive down.

The dragon rider furiously and wildly shrouded his entire body with scarlet battle qi. Like a pulsing ball of flames, he gripped the Dragon Slaughtering Lance with both hands and rocketed towards Chen Nan.

This time, Chen Nan used both hands to grasp the spear. He had already concentrated all of his body's power into the length of the spear. This was a risky maneuver. He wanted to end this battle as soon as possible—defeat the opponent with a single spear strike.

The spear seemed to be alive. The entire body of the spear was enveloped inside a golden glow. The length of the spear lightly trembled. A glowing spear of light, at least half a zhang long, erupted out from the actual spearhead. Its terrible might chilled everyone's hearts.

In the blink of an eye, the dragon rider and his Flying Dragon arrived. Chen Nan held up the long spear and used it in a manner similar to that of a club. He called out, "One Spear Skyward!"

This powerful attack produced another thundering of the wind. The long spear swept up a dazzling brilliance as it slashed down towards the Flying Dragon and its dragon rider.

The dragon rider had already gathered all of his energy into his Dragon Slaughtering Lance. The blinding battle qi was equally as bright and magnificent. With the aid of his dragon's power, he fiercely flew towards Chen Nan.

"Younger apprentice brother, quickly avoid it!" shouted the dragon rider who had yet to go on stage. He had only been watching the battles proceed the entire time.

Swooping down, the dragon rider also sensed that the long spear contained an incredible burst of power. However, there was already not enough time to dodge. He braced himself and continued with his attack.

The 'One Spear Skyward' scattered the dragon rider's battle qi, destroyed his Dragon Slaughtering Lance into pieces, and continued onwards towards his chest.

The dragon rider was so scared, it seemed like his soul had already left his body. He quickly leapt off the Flying Dragon and tumbled down off to the side. Although he had dodged the fatal blow, the golden spear of light coming out of the spearhead acted like a sharp blade as it slashed open a giant, bloody wound into his abdomen. Bright, fresh blood violently spurted out. The dragon rider let out a blood-curdling scream as he fell to the ground.

Although the 'One Spear Skyward' didn't accurately hit the dragon rider, it still successfully smashed the Flying Dragon. The colossal creature was actually smashed back over ten zhang by the spear strike. Ultimately, it dropped to the ground with a loud boom.

The entire practice arena was void of the chirping of crows and sparrows. After about half a minute of absolute silence, everyone burst into cheers that shook the sky.

Merely two strikes from Chen Nan had caused the dragon rider to

dismount and the Flying Dragon to be smashed. This left everyone from the Empire of Chu to grow impassioned with boiling blood. They couldn't contain their wild cheers.

The several experts among the army said, "He's truly an eastern martial artist of the third rank! Too powerful, he really is too powerful! Even if he didn't want others to admire him, others would still revere him!"

Everyone from the Residence of Eccentrics was discussing what just happened with one another. A martial artist with profound cultivation said, "Although it's thanks to his profound power for allowing him to be able to pull off this quick win, you cannot deny this boy's cultivation is astonishing..."

From the center of the viewing terrace, Chu Yue had a look of contemplation. "His cultivation is actually this profound, but Yu'er was able to capture him before. How strange..."

At first, the Little Princess's feet and hands were dancing, but now she was muttering, "How did this guy suddenly become so powerful? And how come he can draw back Houyi Bow? He truly is an eccentric bastard..."

If Chen Nan and the dragon rider had had an ordinary battle, perhaps a victor could only be decided after ten exchanges were exceeded, but the two of them had used all of their power in just a few attacks, resulting in two powerful strikes being enough to decide the victor. Chen Nan turned around and looked in Nalan Ruoshui's direction, but he could only regretfully see her back. He didn't know why she was leaving the arena.

All around the practice arena, the loud cheering of the crowd continued for a long time before finally settling down.

The remaining, final dragon rider slowly walked over to the center of the arena. The aura of a strong practitioner overflowed from his body. His formidable imposing manner caused everyone watching to feel heavily oppressed. The arena suddenly became extremely quiet. Even those civil officials that didn't understand any practitioner ways found this dragon rider to be terrifying.

The dragon rider shed his upper garment, exposing his bronze, rugged, muscular flesh. He threw the garment to the side. It disintegrated into pieces in midair. The pieces fluttered about until they fell onto the ground.

Chen Nan calmly gazed at the opposing dragon rider and said, "You're very strong, but you aren't my match."

"I know, but I still need to win."

Chen Nan didn't understand. He didn't know why he would say such a thing.

The dragon rider let out a long howl to the sky. His voice shook the vast sky.

A gigantic shadow flew towards them from the distance. A Monolithic Dragon over thirty zhang long appeared at the practice arena. Like a black cloud, it shrouded the arena from the celestial sun. It cast a massive

shadow onto the ground.

This was a black Monolithic Dragon. It had shiny, pitch-black scales; a frightening, gigantic tail; a pair of broad wings; and a fierce head. It intimidated one's soul and left them utterly terrified.

Everyone present at the arena turned pale in fright. They never thought the final dragon rider would actually possess a Monolithic Dragon of the fourth rank. This was simply something insurmountable!

The Emperor of Chu, Chu Han, had been confident the entire time up until now. He couldn't help but tightly lock his brows. He didn't know whether or not the wielder of Houyi Bow, Chen Nan, was capable of handling such a terrifying black dragon.

Although Chu Yue had seen Chen Nan in action and knew how incredibly powerful he was with Houyi Bow in hand, she also felt somewhat worried.

Princess Chu Yu wasn't anxious at all as she watched the scene unfold before her. "Aiyah, degenerate will definitely become famous after this. If he shoots down a Monolithic Dragon, how could his name not move the continent? When that happens... how terribly bad it will be..."

Everyone from the Residence of Eccentrics was also in heated discussion.

The Old Poison Devil said, "This doesn't make any sense. This youngster is only a second ranked Flying Dragon Rider. How can he have a forth

ranked Monolithic Dragon?"

The Old Witch unblinkingly stared at that black Monolithic Dragon in the sky and said, "The owner of this black dragon is the fourth ranked Monolithic Dragon Rider Jason, that old ghost. I've seen it before. This kid must be Jason's disciple. I never expected this kid to actually borrow that old ghost's dragon."

Chen Nan was carefully scanning through the crowd. Finally, he found Nalan Ruoshui. A warm current welled in his heart.

Regaining his state of mind, he gazed at the Monolithic Dragon overhead. He didn't feel a single hint of fear. With a single hand holding the spear, he pointed it towards the sky. A fighting spirit erupted from his heart and shot to the sky.

When the dragon rider saw Chen Nan's expression, a bewildered look appeared on his face. With a wave of his hand, the Monolithic Dragon began spiraling downwards into the arena. A fierce gale erupted, and a sandstorm blanketed the sky.

The dragon rider quickly climbed onto the black dragon's back. The black dragon directly rocketed back into the sky. In the sky, it roared constantly. Its roars resembled rumbling, muffled thunder.

When everyone heard the deafening roar, they all felt dread. Up against a black dragon that was like a leviathan, even just watching the battle struck fear into their hearts, let alone actually battling it themselves.

A great battle broke out again. The dragon rider didn't wield any weapons. He simply concentrated his entire heart and mind on steering the Monolithic Dragon.

"Pu!"

Diving down, the black dragon opened its colossal mouth and breathed out a cloud of draconic breath to engulf Chen Nan.

The draconic breath possessed a strong toxic and corrosive attribute. Normally, only fourth ranked Monolithic Dragons and higher had the capability of breathing this out. If ordinary people were to come into contact with just a drop of the draconic breath, they would be poisoned to a violent death. Simultaneously, the infected places would be dissolved.

Chen Nan's figure moved like a flash of lightning. He quickly dashed horizontally a distance of ten zhang. The place he was originally standing in was instantly corroded by the draconic breath.

The Monolithic Dragon bellowed and shot out another three draconic breaths, forcing Chen Nan to continuously dodge around the arena.

All the onlookers were utterly terrified.

Up in the sky, the dragon rider yelled, "Concede and I'll spare your life. You simply cannot prevail over this Monolithic Dragon."

After Chen Nan dodged the final draconic breath, he stood in place and

said, "I won't necessarily lose."

He already decided to use Houyi Bow. If he only relied on his own cultivation, he absolutely wasn't capable of prevailing over this Monolithic Dragon.

Just then, the black Monolithic Dragon swooped down like a bolt of lightning striking the earth. After shooting out an intense draconic breath, it suddenly swung its colossal tail. It shrouded the sky as it hacked down.

Chen Nan was greatly startled. Employing his ancestral profound skill to its limit, steaming, golden flames raged on his body. Like a golden arrow, he hastily retreated to the very edge of the practice arena.

"Hong!"

The colossal draconic tail heavily struck the surface of the arena, and the earth fiercely quaked. Within the practice arena, dust and sand was blown into the air. When the smoke finally dispersed, a one zhang deep, two zhang wide, nearly ten zhang long ravine appeared within the arena.

Everyone watching outside of the arena inhaled a breath of cold air. The Monolithic Dragon's strength was too frightening.

The Monolithic Dragon spun circles in the sky. With a roar, the vibrating sound wave rumbled like thunder.

Chen Nan took great strides from the edge of the arena back to the

center. He didn't look scared at all. When he arrived at the center of the arena, he fetched Houyi Bow off his back. He fixed the spear from his hand into the bowstring. Specks of golden light and a faint golden glow suffused from the pitch-black Godly Bow.

Most of the civil and military officials watching had never seen Houyi Bow before. Seeing him unexpectedly use a nearly one zhang long spear as a plumed arrow amazed them tremendously.

The world's original vital qi frantically surged from everywhere to the center of the arena. An immense wave of energy surged on like a monumental tsunami.

At that moment, even the civil officials who did not understand practitioner ways felt the turbulently surging wave of energy. Everyone was shivering endlessly.

The world's original vital qi surged towards Chen Nan. Powerful energy continuously flowed towards him and Houyi Bow. This caused the duo to produce a dazzling radiance. With an unwavering expression, he coldly gazed at the Monolithic Dragon in the sky.

At the viewing terrace, the Emperor of Chu nodded his head. "This youngster is seriously outstanding. He's so young, yet he already possesses a generational expert's demeanour."

The Little Princess murmured, "This guy is very devilish, but right now, he actually seems proper..."

Nalan Ruoshui's mood was extremely complicated. She almost didn't believe her own eyes. The Chen Nan in the arena and the youth she had become acquainted with were completely different. She currently couldn't see even a trace of his former self. They seemed to be two utterly different individuals. She felt like the distance between herself and Chen Nan had drastically grown...

The boundless energy in the arena began violently fluctuating. An endless number of light rays exploded out from Chen Nan and Houyi Bow. A tyrannical, peerless imposingness sprang out from his body.

Everyone could feel this intense pressure. For a split second, that youth wielding Houyi Bow at the center of the arena seemed to transform into a giant capable of supporting both the heaven and the earth. It gave everyone the urge to prostrate themselves in front of him and worship him.

Chen Nan had already gathered enough power. The golden brilliance surrounding Houyi Bow flowed like water towards the long spear. The spear forged from steel essence turned completely golden.

The heavenly Monolithic Dragon seemed to sense the dangerous aura. Its body shuddered as it let out an unreconciled roar. It flew up vertically, quickly trying to escape.

But it was already too late. Chen Nan gently released the bowstring. A golden bolt of lightning took off into the sky. A fierce storm erupted in the arena. The thunder rumbled.

This fantastic scene shook the courage of the entire crowd. Many of the

more timid people were already cowering on the ground, limp.

In the blink of an eye, the golden lightning overtook the Monolithic Dragon. A reverberating, mournful howl roared through the sky. A vast rain of blood sprayed down from the heavens. The Monolithic Dragon, like a kite that had its string cut, fell head first to the ground.

Chen Nan quickly sprinted away from the arena. The gigantic black dragon fell directly to the ground head first. The earth rocked. Its draconic body smashed a huge, deep crater into the ground.

The people watching outside the arena almost didn't dare believe their own eyes. The scene that had unfolded before them seemed to have come straight out of a legend. A youth unexpectedly shot down a Monolithic Dragon!

With this matchless arrow, Chen Nan stunned everyone's innermost beings.

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1 So if you haven't noticed, there's a ton of light in basically every battle that happens. This spear of light thing is different than the actual spear. I am under the impression that they are using their qi to basically create qi projectiles that seem like weapons made out of light, so Chen Nan shot off ten spears made out of his brightly glowing qi from his actual spear. At other times, characters can also layer an edge made out of their qi onto their actual weapons to make it more damaging or whatever, as well as other effects.

## Volume 2 Chapter 9: A Crazy Decision

The long spear shot by Houyi Bow had pierced the Monolithic Dragon through its left eye and burrowed through its head. This was a mortal arrow—it had killed the Monolithic Dragon instantaneously.

The dragon rider had fallen from the sky along with the Monolithic Dragon. With the Monolithic Dragon serving as his cushion, although his life wasn't in any immediate danger, the fall still severely injured him, and he had fallen unconscious.

After the crowd got over their astonishment, they erupted into cheers that rocked the sky.

As everyone was cheering, in the depths of the imperial palace, the emperor's great-great-grandfather, that old man over a hundred and seventy years old, sighed towards the sky, "Sure enough, it is as I expected... He is truly incredible..."

After his battle at the imperial palace, Chen Nan's name thrilled the Empire of Chu. Soon thereafter, the news spread like a wildfire throughout the entire continent. The majority of practitioners knew that the Empire of Chu had gained a youthful expert that could shoot down heavenly dragons. With one battle, Chen Nan had become famous.

The following few days after the battle, an endless stream of people passed through the Residence of Eccentrics. Military officials of the court, experts from the military, they all came to pay respects to Chen Nan, so much that there were even quite a few people who had dropped by to propose marriage.

After Chen Nan defeated the dragon rider, the status of the Residence of Eccentrics once again improved. Every eccentric was revered by the people. This caused the manner of cultivation of the Empire of Chu to greatly flourish.

Within the imperial palace of Chu, Emperor Chu Han and the Eldest Princess Chu Yue were currently having a secret meeting.

Chu Han asked, "Have those three dragon riders already returned to the State of Tianyang?"

Chu Yue said, "Yes, they're currently on the way back."

Chu Han sighed. "These three are young talents. They're all geniuses that are rare to obtain. What a pity it is that they aren't citizens of my Chu. Because of this, there's no way I can just let them leave. Otherwise, twenty years from now, the State of Tianyang will gain another three exceptional experts."

Chu Yue smiled. "Father's thinking is deep. I've already sent a carrier pigeon to deliver the letter. The day they reach the border of Tianyang is the day of their deaths."

Chu Han nodded and said, "They already have heavily wounded bodies, so it shouldn't prove much of a problem. This matter is easy to handle. In comparison, the matter involving Chen Nan is much more bothersome!"

Chu Yue creased her fine eyebrows. "Father, the day before the birthday

banquet, we had already given our blessings for the marriage between Nalan Ruoshui and Sima Lingkong to proceed. Was this too careless? If Chen Nan were to find out about this, his heart will definitely harbour resentment towards us."

Chu Han said, "I thought he was only capable of drawing back Houyi Bow. Who could've known he'd also be a third ranked martial artist at the level of Sword Qi Beyond the Body?"

Chu Yue said, "Yesterday, I already asked some of the eccentrics with profound cultivation in the Residence of Eccentrics about this. They said Chen Nan has great potential. Not only that, but it's entirely possible there will come a day when he surpasses Elder Zhuge Chengfeng."

Chu Han sighed. "In a few more days, it will be the date of Sima Lingkong's marriage. At that time, if Chen Nan can't refrain from attacking, it will be a true disaster! Maybe he will revolt against my Great Chu and seek refuge in another nation. If that happened, my Empire of Chu would not only lose a genius, but we'd also become a laughingstock of other nations."

Chu Yue said, "If that's the case, we had better hurry and retake Houyi Bow. If he really revolts against our Empire of Chu and abscond with Houyi Bow, that'd be disastrous."

Chu Han said, "Doing something like that would be tantamount to forcing him to rebel against Chu. We'll have to wait until this crisis passes before discussing this again. I presume there won't be many mishaps happening."

Chu Yue pondered for a moment. "Father has come to a decision. Actually, our actions are not at all inappropriate. Although he has incredible potential, he's still just a single mere practitioner. He cannot compare with the resilient strength of a great clan."

Not before too long, the Emperor of Chu dispatched men to the Residence of Eccentrics to confer upon Chen Nan fifty thousand gold coins, a hundred sets of silk clothing, and also bestowed upon him another title: 'Protector of the Nation'. This could be said to be a massive honour. Eccentrics were already greatly respected. Now with the addition of the title of 'Protector of the Nation', his status grew in glory.

All the eccentrics went over to Chen Nan in order to congratulate him. The Old Poison Devil jokingly said, "Boy, you really know how to put on a show. One spear, one stick, and one arrow, all in exchange for the title of 'Protector of the Nation'. How outstanding!"

The Old Witch squeezed herself through the crowd and said to Chen Nan, "Youngster, I need to remind you of something. If you ever go to the western continent, you must be careful. The black dragon you shot dead at the practice arena at the imperial palace was the mount of the Western Monolithic Dragon Rider Jason. Jason's character is reclusive; he doesn't enjoy associating with others, nor does he have any friends. It seems like that black dragon had been the only treasure in his life. Now that you've shot it dead, that old ghost will sooner or later come looking for you."

Chen Nan nodded. He had already guessed that that black dragon wasn't the Tianyang dragon rider's mount.

For the past few days since the battle, Chen Nan had been bathing in unlimited riches and glory. This left the severely injured Sima Lingkong

incredibly jealous and resentful. Although he had also received a hefty reward, it was a bit lacking in comparison to Chen Nan's. Ultimately, in a fit of rage, he moved out of the Residence of Eccentrics and returned home to recuperate.

Five days after the great battle at the imperial palace, stunning news resounded at Chen Nan's ears.

"The emperor has blessed the marriage between Sima Lingkong and Nalan Ruoshui to proceed. Their wedding date has been decided to be five days from now."

When Chen Nan heard this news escape from the mouth of the Old Poison Devil, his expression drastically turned. Ruoshui was still being forced into a pit of fire. He originally believed that although the emperor may not have married Nalan Ruoshui off to him, he also wouldn't so quickly have her marry Sima Lingkong either. He had thought the emperor would have definitely delayed any talks of marriage for a while before coming to a decision.

But in reality, this did not happen.

He had contributed a great merit to the imperial family, yet they were not giving him even half a thought. For them to so quickly come to their decision, no matter how he looked at it, he never expected this outcome. A flicker flashed through Chen Nan's eyes. A faint, ruthless air appeared on Chen Nan's face.

The Old Poison Devil jumped back in fright. "Boy, what's wrong with you...?"

"Ah~!" Chen Nan let out a booming shout. The sound wave rolled like thunder, surging through the Residence of Eccentrics. Everyone in a circumference of ten li could hear his vehement voice. Chen Nan's fury reached a whole new level. His look was sinister. A golden light vigorously flourished from his body. The torrential golden light on his body looked like raging flames.

The Old Poison Devil was so scared, he ran out of Chen Nan's house and into the courtyard.

"Chi!"

A blade of sword qi burst out from the roof.

"Chi!", "Chi!"...

Innumerable rays of sword qi came bursting out from the walls from within the house. The sword qi's brilliance had a dazzle that seized the eyes. The sword qi raged, criss-crossing everywhere like a bolt of lightning snaking its way through the sky. With a rumble, the entire house collapsed.

Chen Nan stood in the debris and didn't say anything for a long time.

The Old Poison Devil prudently and cautiously walked over to him and asked, "Chen Nan... are you okay?"

Chen Nan suppressed the anger raging in his heart. His expression gradually relaxed.

"Ai, if I were to say I'm alright, I'd be a liar. I didn't think His Imperial Majesty would actually treat me like this. How heartless can he be?"

The Old Poison Devil said, "Five days ago, His Imperial Majesty bestowed upon you the title of Eccentric Protector of the Nation, yet he never said a word about the matter involving Nalan Ruoshui. His intentions are very clear..."

Just at that moment, the eccentrics living in the Residence of Eccentrics came one after another to Chen Nan's courtyard. Seeing the rubble before them, they weren't baffled at all. They already knew why Chen Nan was angry. They've known for a while now about the affair between Chen Nan, Nalan Ruoshui, and Sima Lingkong. After finding out the emperor had blessed the marriage between Sima Lingkong and Nalan Ruoshui, they all felt Chen Nan had suffered injustice.

"Ai, Chen Nan just recently contributed a great service to the Empire of Chu, I didn't think..."

"With regards to the affairs of one's life, of ten affairs, eight or nine of them will not coincide with your feelings..."

"Lad, don't brood too much over it."

...

Everyone said their condolences to Chen Nan.

Chu Yue already received the report. Creasing her brows, she said, "I only wish he doesn't cause any problems."

In the blink of an eye, another three days passed. There were two more days until the marriage between Sima Lingkong and Nalan Ruoshui. Sima Lingkong had already fully recovered from his injuries. In the past few days, although his reward hadn't been as extravagant as Chen Nan's, he still brought back a few beauties home. He believed Chen Nan liked Nalan Ruoshui and guessed that his counterpart was currently wallowing in grief and ire. When he thought of this, a grin formed at the corner of his mouth. He decided to go pay a visit to the Residence of Eccentrics.

Sima Lingkong was proud of his success. He greeted everyone he walked past. With a left turn here and a right turn there, he arrived outside Chen Nan's courtyard. Coincidentally, Chen Nan was just leaving. They faced each other.

"Why, isn't this the Eccentric Protector of the Nation? Wherever must you go? Little brother was just about to pay respects to Eccentric Protector of the Nation-daren." Whenever Sima Lingkong said the words 'Protector of the Nation', he would scowl harshly with a ridiculing expression.

Chen Nan grew furious. A cold light flickered at his eyes. Although he currently did not love Nalan Ruoshui, he still rather liked her. Moreover, she had his figure in her heart. He couldn't possibly tolerate the eccentric girl suffering any misfortune; not after the kindness she had shown him.

"Sima Lingkong, don't be so proud of yourself. Although the emperor has blessed your marriage, he doesn't care about you at all. He only cares about your father, your family. You are merely the second generation, nothing more!"

Sima Lingkong coldly laughed. "Regardless of what you say, one thing hasn't changed: two days from now, Ruoshui and I will get married. The groom isn't you, heihei."

"Sima Lingkong, fuck off for me. I don't want to look at you."

"Fine. Since Eccentric Protector of the Nation-daren has spoken, I will take my leave. But in two days, you definitely have to come to my wedding ceremony. En, at that time, you can come play pranks on us newlyweds, heihei."

Chen Nan's face turned ashen. Watching Sima Lingkong gradually disappear off into the distance, he smashed the gate behind him into pieces with a single blow.

When Chen Nan appeared before the Old Poison Devil, the scared old man jumped back.

"Hey, boy, why is your expression so ugly? Are you ill?"

"Perverted old man, let me ask you, where does Ruoshui live?"

"You... What the hell are you trying to do? Boy, don't cause any trouble. If you want to kidnap the bride, I urge you to give up. These past two

days, the Eldest Princess has dispatched many warriors with profound cultivation to the left minister's house to guard Nalan Ruoshui. You don't have any chance."

Chen Nan's face soured. He inwardly sighed at how dreadful the Eldest Princess truly was. She actually anticipated his actions.

The night light was like water. The ten thousand bamboo flutes were silent. This was destined to be a sleepless night.

Chen Nan restlessly tossed and turned. He was carefully considering his options. "What should I do? Am I supposed to watch helplessly as Ruoshui marries that bastard?" A lively look shot out from his eyes as he said to himself, "Ruoshui has shown me great kindness, and her heart holds my figure. I can't promise her anything, but there is absolutely no way I can sit idly by and watch her jump into a pit of fire. I must put a stop to this wedding. I can't leave behind any regrets!"

Although he had come to a decision, there was still some worry left in his heart.

"In the short span of three months, so many unimaginable things have happened. After I resolve this problem, I have to leave this place as soon as possible." Finally, he entered the realm of dreams.

In the early morning, Chen Nan ran over to the Old Poison Devil's house.

Seeing his smiling expression, the Old Poison Devil grew suspicious. "Boy, your face has been ugly for the past few days; why has your

prediction suddenly changed from overcast to clear?"

Chen Nan said, "Let's chat inside."

After they entered the house, he hastily hit ten or so major acupoints on the Old Poison Devil's body. Although the Old Poison Devil's martial arts was not bad, it was barely enough to be considered as not bad. He simply couldn't be compared with ranked experts.

"Boy, what the fuck are you doing? You—"

"Shush! Don't shout loudly. I just want to have a proper chat with you."

"You want to chat with me? Then why must you seal my acupoints?"

"Because the thing I need to talk to you about is too frightening. I feared you wouldn't want to discuss it with me, so I came up with this ploy."

"Speak, what the hell is the problem?"

"I know your poison techniques are the absolute best in the Empire of Chu. May you prescribe some medicine for me?"

"What medicine?"

"Something that won't kill anyone. After taking the medicine, I just want

it to temporarily cripple someone's cultivation."

The instant the Old Poison Devil heard this, he immediately cried, "Boy, what the hell are you trying to do? Do you really need to cause chaos?"

"That's right, so do you have that kind of medicine?"

Upon hearing this request, the Old Poison Devil broke out into a cold sweat. "Chen Nan, don't go make trouble. The imperial capital has plenty of experts; there's no way you'll end up successful."

Chen Nan looked into the Old Poison Devil's eyes. "Although there are many experts, I have Houyi Bow. No one can stop me."

With a shaky voice, the Old Poison Devil said, "If you create chaos in the imperial capital, even if you are able to flee, the Empire of Chu can go after you across borders."

"The world is so big, and I have not inferior martial arts. If I want to escape from pursuers from the Empire of Chu, I can easily do it. Perverted old man, do you have that kind of medicine?"

"N-no."

"Liar. With one look at your face, I can tell you're lying to me. On the basis of our friendship, you wouldn't refuse to help me, right?"

"It isn't that I don't want to help you, it's that I truly don't have the heart

to watch you jump into a pit of fire."

"I already told you that you don't have to worry; I am in absolutely no danger. You just have to give me that medicine and it'll be fine."

The Old Poison Devil's face turned bitter. "You're in no danger, but I certainly am. When the time comes and you run away, what am I supposed to do? They'll definitely discover my involvement."

Chen Nan thought for a moment. "It doesn't matter. After you give me the medicine, I'll knock you unconscious. When the time comes, just say I overpowered you."

"No." The Old Poison Devil scowled at him and said, "This method is too shoddy. If we do it like this, after they investigate me, there's no way I'd be able to run."

Chen Nan said, "Then what should we do? Tomorrow is Ruoshui's wedding. If I don't rescue her from her wedding ceremony tomorrow, her whole life will be ruined."

"Do you insist on doing something so dangerous? Can't you..." The Old Poison Devil wanted to say the word 'abandon', but no matter what, he couldn't say it. Seeing the look of resolve on Chen Nan's face, he finally let out a sigh and said, "Fine, I'll throw caution to the wind. Before, you gave me the Poison Scriptures. In my eyes, that was an enormous favour. Even if you requested my life, I'd give it to you. Today, I'll repay you with my life."

With a smile that wasn't a smile, Chen Nan looked at the Old Poison

Devil. "Do you truly want to repay me with your life? That's fine. Soon, after you give me the medicine, I'll kill you, so you won't have to endure any excessive torture in the future."

The Old Poison Devil cried out, "Stinky boy, you're too savage. You don't have an ounce of sympathy. Ai, it seems like I can't stay in the imperial capital any longer. After I give you the medicine, I'll immediately flee far from the imperial capital and rush to another nation."

After the Old Poison Devil's acupoints were released, he asked, "What do you have planned?"

Chen Nan said, "I plan to take action during the wedding ceremony tomorrow."

"Y-you're insane. Great General Sima Changfeng and left minister Nalan Wencheng are both major figures of the Chu government. The two of them will be bound by the marriage of their kin. They definitely must have invited His Imperial Majesty as a guest to the ceremony. At that time, the Sima Residence will certainly be as sturdy as if it were built by copper and iron walls; there's no way for you to penetrate it. For you to choose that time to take action, it's simply... simply going off to your own death. You might as well just go to the left minister's house and kidnap her."

Heihei..." Chen Nan coldly laughed. "If I need to create chaos, I'll create so much chaos that no one understands what's happening anymore. Not only must I to rescue Ruoshui, I must also do it right in front of the emperor and all of his military and civil officials. I want to cause a big event. I want to sully the Empire of Chu's face. What the three dragon riders from the State of Tianyang failed to do, I'll finish on their behalf. I

need to give the Empire of Chu a great slap in the face!"

The Old Poison Devil was rendered wide-eyed and slack-jawed. He muttered, "Lunatic! Lunatic! If this matter becomes known to other countries, it will definitely make the Empire of Chu lose face. This time, you'll be conducting a lunatic's revenge. You're just a lunatic!"

Chen Nan sneered. "That day I battled those two dragon riders in succession at the imperial palace, it seemed to be effortless, but it was actually incredibly dangerous. I risked my life to seize a life and to preserve the Empire of Chu's honour, but what was the result?"

The Old Poison Devil said, "The emperor really acted improperly over this matter. Right after you had just contributed an outstanding service, he had married Nalan Ruoshui off to another. He certainly has an icy heart."

Chen Nan let out a cold humph. "Of the experts in the imperial capital, the ones I am most worried about are the ranked practitioners of the Residence of Eccentrics. If I can render these people temporarily unable to take action, my pressure will lessen immensely."

The Old Poison Devil said, "Right when you had entered the Residence of Eccentrics, I saw that you were an honest man. I didn't think that over the course of a few days, you'd seemingly switch with another person. Not only did you suddenly gain terrifying cultivation, you've become this insane. I'm seriously out of luck. What kind of shitty luck made me meet you?" He let out a sigh and continued, "For the sake of our friendship, I'll add some extra 'seasoning' in the kitchen today. It will take effect an hour before noon and last for two hours."

"Perverted old man, I sincerely thank you."

"Ai, after living a few good years in the imperial capital, I really don't want to leave. Boy, what are your plans? After you go crazy at the Sima Residence, where do you plan on taking Nalan Ruoshui?"

"I'm still unsure. It will be fine as long as we can leave the Empire of Chu."

"Boy, you are seriously too muddled. Even if you flee to one of the Empire of Chu's vassal states, you'll still find it equally as difficult to escape death. I'll point you into the direction you should go. Have you ever heard of the City of Freedom?"

Chen Nan felt that it was very familiar. He carefully thought for a moment and remembered that just a few months ago, he had been scouring through countless books at the imperial library room of ancient texts. Although his knowledge on the geography of the continent wasn't too precise, he still had a general idea.

When Xianhuan Continent and Mohuan Continent merged together, a continuous, lofty mountain range emerged at its common border. This resulted in a circumference of a hundred thousand li becoming obscure, without the presence of humans. Within this boundless mountain range, although traces of people were scarcely seen, vicious beasts roamed everywhere. Not only did this place have western dragons, it also had giants (remnants from times long past), as well as many other unheard of powerful demons and monsters. Perhaps they may even be some legendary creatures there, too.

Afterwards, the relations between the east and the west became more and more inseparably close. People passed through the incredibly dangerous path until they finally opened up an adjoining path that cut through the middle of the mountain range in order to connect the two continents. Unfortunately, not too long after this, a large-scale war happened to break out between the east and the west. This road became a road of warfare. Here, blood flowed like rivers, bones piled up infinitely, and a countless number of brave souls were put to rest.

After the battle between the east and the west concluded, this path was abandoned for a long time until restoration efforts began. Because the road was long and dangerous, a few inns and taverns gradually started to emerge at the roadside, providing people with a place to rest and lodging for the night, as well as helping them replenish their supplies. Afterwards, along with the frequent dealings between the east and the west, some places gradually took the form of villages. With thousands of years of development, a flourishing metropolis emerged at the roadside. It was precisely that City of Freedom.

The City of Freedom wasn't considered to belong to any country. It was an independent city. Because its geographical location was especially unique—it was the most important city along the road connecting the east and the west—its degree of prosperity wasn't any less than that of the imperial capital of Chu, Pingyang City.

The City of Freedom was also called the City of Crime. It was an independent state; it was not under the control of any other nation. Because of this, many major criminals of the continent fled to this place of refuge. This was a place where fish and dragon intermingled; while there are honest people living honest lives there, criminals were assimilated and intermixed with them like it was nothing. However, every person who

fled to this place didn't dare run amok, because here, the amount of strong pugilists was incredible. They intimidated those people who weren't content in their place. Because of this, although the City of Freedom was also called the City of Crime, very few crimes actually occurred. The inhabitants of this place had to abide by the city's rules.

Although the City of Crime had only recently become a city, many powerful practitioners lived there in seclusion. This made the manner of cultivation of the City of Freedom popular. Additionally, this place also contained a famous college of the continent: Shengfeng Institute. It had been established just as long as the City of Freedom had been; it had a history that could trace back a thousand years. The number of institutions on the continent that could rival it could be counted on one's fingers. Shengfeng Institute produced generation after generation of exceptional experts.

Because of all the aforementioned reasons, the City of Freedom was famous on the continent. It became a sparkling gem among the continent's cities.

Chen Nan recalled all of this and knew what kind of place the City of Freedom was.

"I know of this famous city. It's indeed a good place."

The Old Poison Devil said, "How is it only that? It's basically heaven. You don't know how prosperous that place is. Casinos, romantic places... It really makes one cherish the memory. For ten years now, I haven't stepped foot in that place."

Chen Nan said, "You're old, but not at all proper. Your beard is already white, so how can your mind still be filled with those kinds of thoughts?"

"Because I have the heart of a youngster, heihei..." laughed the Old Poison Devil, pleased. "Do you know? A place with freedom everywhere is a golden opportunity. All you need in outstanding ability, then, you can make money extraordinarily fast. You can go to the surrounding mountain range to kill some powerful magical beasts. You can exchange the magicite cores found inside magical beasts for vast amounts of wealth. Or, you can be a bounty hunter and go capture major criminals. You can exchange them for amazing rewards... But if you wanted to flee to that place, then it would probably be better for you to remain low-key. After all, you're a fugitive yourself."

Chen Nan knew magical beasts were originally creatures from Mohuan Continent. From birth, they possessed the full capability to use magic. Weaker magical beasts could only use some simple magic, such as the Snow Rabbit, which could only spit some ice arrows. Fire Foxes can only breathe a flame. Only the more advanced magical beasts could use powerful magic, such as the Thunder Beast, which could release thunder and lightning. Within the body of every magical beast was a magicite core. The higher rank a magical beast was, the more precious the magicite core in its body was. Magicite cores were necessary for magi to study magic; they were their precious materials. Because of this, their prices were outrageously expensive.

The Old Poison Devil had the face of a pig bro. "In the City of Freedom, beauties are as common as the clouds. In particular are the schoolgirls from Shengfeng Institute. They're simply the best of the best."

Chen Nan scolded him in a low voice, "You perverted old man, you truly are old, yet not an ounce proper."

The Old Poison Devil, like an unstoppable torrent, said, "Students capable of meeting the requirements to enter Shenfeng Institute are very few in number because the requirements are pitilessly high. Only young, powerful practitioners that are ranked are capable of entering. The number of students who don't meet the requirements is also incredibly high. Because Shenfeng Institute is famous on the continent, many countries' aristocrats and nobles rely on their connections to send their children to study at Shenfeng Institute. There, coming across a prince or a princess is rather commonplace. Now that I think about it, it really makes me excited! So many princesses, royal women, and noblewomen are there! If I could go in, I'd be so happy I'd die."

Chen Nan gave the Old Poison Devil a ruthless smack upside his head and said, "Old lover boy, go back to what you were talking about before."

The Old Poison Devil resembled a ball leaking air, immediately withering. With a frown and a concerned expression, he said, "Fine. Soon I'll go to the kitchen to add some extra 'seasoning'. Afterwards, I'll sneak away from the imperial capital at night. When I leave, I won't say goodbye to you. I hope I can find you in the City of Freedom."

"Perverted old man, thank you!" Chen Nan turned around and walked away.

When the curtain of night fell, the Old Poison Devil fled from the imperial capital.

The bright full moon was suspended at the horizon. The moonlight shone like water, bathing Chen Nan's heart and soul in a sense of serenity.

He had already finished his preparations for the upcoming great battle.

## Volume 2 Chapter 10: Battle at the Imperial Capital

Early in the morning, when the first rays of sunlight shone into the room, Chen Nan opened his eyes. After washing up, he sat down inside of his room and began to meditate, regulating his breathing.

All the eccentrics of the Residence of Eccentrics had received the wedding invitations from the Sima Residence. After breakfast, they all hurried towards the Sima Residence one after another. Only when the Residence of Eccentrics became entirely vacant did Chen Nan finally leap up from his meditative state. He had already adjusted the circumstances to be as favourable to him as possible. On his back was Houyi Bow, and a long knife was slung at his waist. He strode away from the residence.

The capital of Chu was especially bustling. The streets were heavily congested by endless streams of pedestrians and horse-drawn carriages. Shops were packed onto both sides of the roads. The calls of buying and selling filled the air.

Today was the date of the marriage between the Mighty Great General Sima Changfeng's son, Sima Lingkong, and the Minister of the Left Nalan Wencheng's daughter, Nalan Ruoshui. The official positions of Sima Changfeng and Nalan Wencheng were as high as possible. Thus, they also invited the Emperor of Chu to participate in the wedding ceremony. Because of this, the number of soldiers policing all the avenues and alleyways was many times greater than usual.

Chen Nan didn't walk down the clamouring avenue very far when he was stopped by a squad of soldiers wielding pikes.

"Halt! Who are you? Why have you brought a knife with you onto the streets?"

"I am Chen Nan."

The interrogating soldier turned to his comrades and said, "Chen Nan... Why does it sound so familiar...?"

One of other soldiers replied, "Could it be the one who defeated the dragon riders, the Eccentric Protector of the Nation, Chen Nan?"

"That's precisely it." For the sake of going passed this squad of soldiers as soon as possible, he pointed his finger to the ground. With a 'chi' sound, a ray of golden sword qi shot out and immediately blasted a deep hole into the ground.

"Ah! The rumoured golden sword qi... It really is Eccentric Protector of the Nation-daren!" the squad cried out, surprised. They quickly saluted him.

Chen Nan waved his hand and said, "Rise. I must go participate in Sima Lingkong's wedding ceremony. One of you stay behind and lead me, the rest can continue with patrolling."

With a soldier leading the way, no one else stopped Chen Nan as he went on his way. After he arrived outside of the Sima Residence, Chen Nan waved the soldier off and sent him back on patrol.

The Sima Residence's courtyard was tall and had an exceptional style.

The word 'happiness' was pasted on top of the vermilion gate. Two mighty guardian lions carved from white marble were situated at either sides of the entrance. A heavy stream of traffic was currently heading inside of the residence with no end in sight. Everyone that was permitted to enter had a respected status. Over half of them were aristocrats from the imperial capital.

Not far from the Sima Residence, Chen Nan calmly surveyed the area. Right when the emperor arrived, he went around the corner and into a small alley at the side. All the officials participating in the wedding exited the residence to respectfully welcome the head of state Chu Han. The extravagance and ostentatiousness displayed could easily leave anyone speechless. The cries of "long live" echoed through the residence. It didn't settle down for quite some time.

After approximately one hour, the sound of music soared to the sky. The procession escorting the bride had arrived. Sima Lingkong sat atop a tall horse. His body was draped in auspicious red clothing. With a delighted look, he seemed fully happy with his position.

The procession escorting the bride in the marriage sedan was incredibly sensational. There were no less than a hundred instrumental performers, let alone the other members of the procession. The accompanying protection personnel numbered no less than a thousand. The prestige was tremendous. Close to a hundred warriors were surrounding the marriage sedan of the bride, Nalan Ruoshui. Just one look told of the profound power that these people possessed. The security was extremely tight.

When they approached the Sima Residence, a dark green Flying Dragon suddenly soared out from within. The Flying Dragon circled overhead Sima Lingkong and let out a long cry. Afterwards, a red roll of paper

suddenly descended down from the Flying Dragon's body. Four words were written on the paper: Hundred Years of Happiness.

The crowd on the street immediately began raving.

"Look, a dragon!"

"Hundred years of happiness."

"I pray that Dragon Rider Sima-gongzi and Learned Woman Nalan-xiaojie may have a hundred years of happiness."

...

The bursts of firecrackers sounded simultaneously. The traditional instruments cried together.

Sima Lingkong was glowing with happiness. With a gesture of his hand towards the sky, the Flying Dragon descended back into the residence.

The wedding ceremony still hadn't officially started, yet the day had already started with a tremendous bang.

After the bride's procession entered the Sima Residence, the area in front of the entrance was no longer as active and boisterous as it had just been a moment ago.

Chen Nan came out of the small alleyway. Hearing the beating music and the bursts of joyful cheers, he coldly smiled in his heart.

The words that Sima Lingkong had said to him two days ago continuously resounded through his ears: "Two days from now, Ruoshui and I will get married. The groom isn't you, heihei... In two days, you definitely have to come to my wedding ceremony. En, at that time, you can come play pranks on us newlyweds, heihei."

"Since I've already decided to cause a ruckus, what use is it for me to still hesitate?" When he thought of this, Chen Nan took Houyi Bow off of his back.

At this time, the guards stationed outside of the Sima Residence already noticed him. They shouted, "Who are you? Why have you brought a weapon to this place?"

Chen Nan ignored them as he fetched a plumed arrow out of his quiver and nocked it to the bowstring. Just before the guards advanced towards Chen Nan, a dazzling golden light suddenly erupted from the pitch-black Houyi Bow. An imposingness that struck fear into one's heart and soul sprang forth from his body. The guards prostrated in fear and couldn't resist retreating over ten steps back.

Within the Sima Residence, Sima Lingkong and Nalan Ruoshui were in the hall preparing to kneel to heaven and earth. But at that moment, nearly everyone felt an intense apprehension well up in their hearts.

"Kneel to heaven and earth—"

"Longlong!"

The hosts of the wedding ceremony were abruptly cut short by the sound of thundering wind. Everyone within the reception hall was greatly alarmed.

Chen Nan lightly drew back the bowstring. The plumed arrow shot by Houyi Bow transformed into a golden ray as it flew forwards. The lofty gated entrance of the Sima Residence was pierced through by the golden arrow. With a rumble, it collapsed.

The golden arrow was five or six meters from the ground. It wasn't in a position to harm anyone, but the buildings and structures that it pierced through were left devastated. It seemed like a golden dragon burrowing its way through the residence. Dragging behind a long, golden trail of light, it penetrated through various buildings. Everywhere the golden light passed was left in ruins. The voids left behind in the walls of the buildings resembled 'dragon gates'.

When the golden arrow pierced into the reception hall of the Sima Residence, everyone was left utterly stupefied. The golden arrow blew open the wall above the emperor's head, leaving behind a terrifying 'dragon gate' in its place.

"Protect His Majesty!"

The reception hall was in chaos.

The emperor Chu Han was truly deeply frightened. His complexion was

a deathly white. The empress clutched onto his hand, also terrified.

The Eldest Princess Chu Yue shouted, "Everyone, do not panic." With that, she took up a protective position in front of the emperor.

The Little Princess Chu Yu said, "It's Chen Nan, it must be that degenerate Chen Nan."

Everyone who had seen the battle at the imperial palace all came to the same realization: this godly arrow was definitely fired by Houyi Bow. It was without a doubt Chen Nan's doing.

"Haha..." A long laugh rang from outside the Sima Residence.

"Where is Sima Lingkong? I, Chen Nan, have come to play a prank on him and the newlywed bride in celebration of his marriage." The rolling sound wave surged through the Sima Residence.

Emperor Chu Han's and the Eldest Princess Chu Yue's expressions soured. The thing that they had been endlessly mulling over had finally become reality. Chen Nan really was revolting against the Empire of Chu. This caused them to feel regretful and hateful.

Everyone taking part in the wedding ceremony were aristocrats of the imperial capital. They had already heard about the secret affair; they were well aware of the reasons Chen Nan had to come disturb the wedding ceremony. In addition, it was possible he might revolt against the Empire of Chu.

There was already no way for the wedding ceremony to proceed. Now that Chen Nan had already forced his way through the Sima Residence's gate and brought about destruction on his way to the reception hall, any hope for a peaceful resolution was dashed. He held in his hands a long knife. The blade of the knife emitted a bright, golden glow. A tangible, golden edge of light surrounded the blade. Spears and halberds were crushed underneath its power. Their broken shards flew away. Knife qi raged unrestrained. A powerful force erupted out in crashing waves throughout the residence with him at the center. The warriors within the residence were like duckweed being pushed by vigorous waves and were left staggering. Row after row of people were flipped onto the ground. Within the residence, there was unexpectedly not a single soul who was capable of opposing this attack.

Sima Lingkong furiously ground his teeth. He wanted to swallow Chen Nan whole. He tore off the red wedding bow off of his chest and strode outside.

The guests inside the reception hall, including the emperor Chu Han, all arrived outside in the courtyard. Nalan Ruoshui's delicate body was quivering. She hesitated for a moment before ultimately throwing off her red head covering. She also arrived in the courtyard.

Chu Yue had already ordered others to seal off the Sima Residence. Innumerable imperial guards surrounded the Sima Residence in a tight circle. All the eccentrics from the Residence of Eccentrics were positioned protectively around the emperor. The Little Princess Chu Yu was pulled by the empress to her side. They all stood beside Chu Han.

Sima Lingkong pointed at Chen Nan and said, "Why have you disturbed my wedding?"

Chen Nan said, "Don't give me that bullshit argument. You ought to know why!"

Sima Lingkong's expression was ashen. "What are you doing?"

Just then, a tall, middle-aged man stepped forward from the others and said, "Chen Nan, what are you doing? Since my daughter has already been married to someone else, you shouldn't trouble her any longer."

Hearing these words, Chen Nan learned that the man before him was Nalan Ruoshui's father, the Chu's Minister of the Left, Nalan Wencheng. He cupped his fists together respectfully and said, "Ruoshui simply does not like Sima Lingkong. If she really were wed to him, the only thing she'd obtain is a lifetime of suffering. Do you have the heart to have her jump into a pit of fire?"

Chen Nan had yet to finish speaking when another man interrupted him. A domineering, middle-aged man broke away from the crowd and said, "Eccentric Protector of the Nation, you must understand what you are currently doing. My son's marriage has been blessed by His Majesty. Are you not in agreement with His Majesty?"

"So it's Great General Sima—a great title to bear, heihei. Why don't you straightforwardly talk about how I have already taken action right in front of the emperor? Are you already afraid?" With that said, Chen Nan turned to face Chu Han. With a booming voice, he said, "That day in the practice arena, if not for I, Chen Nan, battling the dragon riders, I'm afraid the Empire of Chu would have been greatly defeated and would have become the laughingstock of the vassal states. I, Chen Nan, risked myself

without any regard for my life in exchange for what? Why has His Majesty blessed the marriage between Nalan-xiaojie and Sima Lingkong? Why have you treated me like so?"

At the side, a court minister admonished, "Audacious! Chen Nan, for you to be bold enough to challenge His Majesty like this, you have already committed an act of treason."

"Treason? Heihei, when someone offers me one chi, I offer them one zhang. If someone offends me, when my patience finally thins, I would still need to drag him before me even if he were the emperor of heaven!" When he said this, he pointed the long knife towards the sky. A resplendent knife edge of light soared to the sky. The dazzling knife edge illuminated the entire courtyard like a bolt of lightning. The thick, cold air was harrowing. Everyone present sensed the impulsive pressure. Everyone's faces discoloured.

Chu Han said, "Chen Nan, we know you are very resentful in your heart, but before the Sima Family proposed—"

Chen Nan interrupted his sentence and coldly laughed, "Heihei. Does one need to queue up to be married?"

The Eldest Princess Chu Yue saw how utterly disrespectful Chen Nan was acting towards the emperor and furiously said, "Chen Nan, you're too excessive! Don't forget you are a subject of my Chu! Should subjects treat their monarch like this?"

The first time Chen Nan had seen Chu Yue, his breath had been taken away. After Chu Yue had pampered him on their way to the imperial

capital as if bathing him in the spring breeze, he had held Chu Yue in even higher regard. But due to the series of events that have recently unfolded, Chu Yue's position in his mind had dipped straight down. This was a deceitful woman who would do anything, fair or foul, if it benefited the imperial family. Her scheming was profound, and somewhat fearful.

"This subject of Chu renounces his title!"

"Y-you were born as a citizen of Chu. Are you rebelling against your own nation? Hereafter, will your heart be peaceful?"

"I do not belong to any country. I am merely a wanderer currently passing through the Empire of Chu, nothing more! In my heart, the Empire of Chu has not ascended to the height of being my ancestral home, so I bear no qualms." When Chen Nan finished these words, Chen Nan considered himself a man from ten thousand years past. Everyone present who heard these words could not make head or tail of what he meant. "I'm just not sure if others can have a clear conscience. For the sake of political gain, they have even thrown their own good friend into a nightmare of a marriage."

Chu Yue's expression turned. She reproved, "Even if you have a thousand reasons, you shouldn't betray Chu!"

Chen Nan had been searching through the crowd the entire time. He now finally discovered Nalan Ruoshui dressed in red marriage attire. Her normally elegant and exquisite complexion was now kind of pale, and incomparably haggard. He threw the long knife into his left hand. With a wave of his right hand, a fierce wind erupted. A golden brilliance exploded out from him, and a gigantic golden palm appeared. The golden palm swept towards Nalan Ruoshui. It wrapped itself around

Nalan Ruoshui and blew up a fierce wind while bringing her towards Chen Nan. The officials that didn't understand practitioner ways were blown to the ground.

The practitioners at the scene with profound cultivation couldn't help but utter, "Capturing Dragon Hand... it's truly the lost skill Capturing Dragon Hand!" All the practitioners were dumbfounded. A lost unique skill had unexpectedly re-emerged in Chen Nan's possession.

Nalan Ruoshui arrived in front of Chen Nan. She suddenly felt a strange feeling. The difference between the Chen Nan of the past and the Chen Nan of the present was growing larger and larger.

Chen Nan gazed into Nalan Ruoshui's eyes and said, "Ruoshui, I'm bringing you away."

"No. I can't go with you." Nalan Ruoshui shook her head.

Chen Nan asked, "Why not?"

Nalan Ruoshui cried out, "Careful!"

Although Sima Lingkong was truly a bit startled at Chen Nan's recent display of remarkable ability, his anger was still boiling. The guy before him had not only disturbed his wedding, but for him to take his bride away right before his face, he was also regarding him as nothing. This simply made him insane with anger. He seized a longsword from a guard adjacent to him and chopped down at Chen Nan. Emerald battle qi produced a 'chichi' sound as it severed the air.

Chen Nan pulled Nalan Ruoshui behind him. The long knife in his left hand returned the attack. A blazing knife edge of light shot forward. A tremendous wave of energy erupted from the resplendent brilliance. With an accompanying violent wind, it produced a peculiar hiss.

"Haha! If you want to fight, then let's fight. Today, I, Chen Nan, must cause chaos in the imperial capital!"

Knife qi and battle qi collided. The sound of the air tearing roared. Chen Nan didn't move from his original position, while Sima Lingkong was pushed back five steps, causing his blood and qi to reel and his face to flush red. But he didn't cower. With a cold flicker in his eyes, he raised his sword to rush forward and attack again.

In the air, knife qi and battle qi raged freely. After sending out a dazzling knife blade of light with a slash, Chen Nan vaulted into the empty space of the sky. A vigorous, golden light surrounded his body, like raging flames. It seemed like his body was draped in battle armour made of gold essence. He jumped overhead Sima Lingkong. An immense pressure pushed down against Sima Lingkong. The matchless, critical pressure left him unable to even breathe, but in the faces of all the imperial capital aristocrats, Sima Lingkong refused to cower, not wanting to lose face. He braced himself and raised his sword in welcome. Bright battle qi directly flew up in counterattack.

When the emerald battle qi met the sword qi underneath Chen Nan's feet, it was smashed into smithereens. Its radiance dissipated in an instant and Chen Nan's external golden sword qi flew down.

Sima Lingkong was greatly startled. As he was retreating, he raised his sword and chopped down. A mirage appeared before everyone's eyes. In a flash, Chen Nan stomped down thirteen footsteps, breaking through the defense of the emerald battle qi. Layer and layer of the sword qi slammed against Sima Lingkong's longsword. Sima Lingkong clenched the sword with both hands and resisted it, but the tremendous pressure was too much for him to bear. Both of his feet sunk into the marble floor, pushing underground.

When Chen Nan stamped the eleventh footstep downwards, the longsword was completely shattered, exploding into many bits of metal and flying onto the ground. Sima Lingkong spat out a mouthful of blood. He was knee-deep into the ground. Just before Chen Nan's twelfth and thirteenth footsteps were about to arrive, Sima Lingkong began to feel incredibly remorseful. He inwardly hated himself for trying to save face. Without any alternatives, he raised both his palms to welcome Chen Nan's feet.

"Hong!", "Hong!" With two explosive booms, a blinding light exploded and waves of qi erupted outward as Sima Lingkong was kicked away. The people present with profound cultivation could all hear the two crisp crunches. After a careful examination, they discovered that Sima Lingkong who had been kicked away had had both of his hands snapped. They were limp, drooping at his wrists.

Meanwhile, Chen Nan chopped down with his mighty, matchless knife. A resplendently dazzling edge of light, like a long rainbow, cut through the sky like lightning. Tremendous energy followed the coursing power as it surged onward.

If that gorgeous knife edge of light were to have hit Sima Lingkong, he definitely would have been obliterated in an instant. Instead, just before

the attack hit its target, several of the emperor's guards that had flown out from the imperial palace had just arrived. Those guards were high ranked martial artists. They quickly rushed forward and received the power of the tremendous knife.

"Hong!"

The swords of the six experts who received the blow were shattered, their shards impaling the ground. The power of the knife attack unexpectedly nearly wounded those six experts. Chen Nan and Sima Lingkong landed on the ground at opposite directions. The former raised his long knife to the sky, a golden glow coiling around his body. His fighting spirit was high. The latter looked deathly pale. Blood endlessly poured from his mouth as he looked on with an ashamed and indignant expression.

This confrontation had been too fast; it had all happened in an instant. If those high ranked marital artists hadn't quickly responded at the final juncture, Sima Lingkong's corpse would have been blown all over the place in pieces.

Many of the onlookers had already seen Chen Nan take action before, but at this moment, they still displayed astonished expressions.

Sima Changfeng shook his head and sighed. "This boy is too hot-headed. How could he try to resist that power?"

The onlookers all began to discuss what had just happened in succession:

"Third ranked eastern martial artists who have reached the level of Sword Qi Beyond the Body are truly terrifying!"

"He can slash out knife edges of light, and he also possesses the lost skill Capturing Dragon Hand..."

...

The Little Princess looked on, extremely joyful. She quietly said, "The story of a hero saving a beautiful woman is happening right in front of me, wow! It's too cool! If during my wedding ceremony there was an awe-inspiring man with unrivalled power that could defeat every expert, and he arrived before me, then that'd be amazing!"

With a 'dong!', the empress smacked her head and chided, "What garbage are you spouting?"

The Little Princess felt incredibly wrong and said, "Why the hell did you hit me?"

The empress looked right and looked left before saying with a low voice, "If you don't stop looking for trouble while we're currently in this predicament, I'll punish you. No leaving the palace for a month."

"Xixi," giggled the Little Princess. "I didn't think this degenerate could become even more awesome."

Chu Yue said to everyone from the Residence of Eccentrics, "Chen Nan is currently going on a rampage. In the presence of the monarch, he is

revolting against Chu. All eccentrics, please cooperate and seize him."

Alarmed cries erupted from among the eccentrics:

"Heavens, why can't I accumulate any magical elements?"

"Why has my cultivation suddenly faded away?"

...

The alarmed cries continued unceasingly.

Chu Yue appeared to come to a realization and her face drastically turned. She angrily shouted at Chen Nan, "You actually incited Senior Old Poison Devil into poisoning all the eccentrics! You're... very savage. How many people must you sacrifice?" Chu Yue was truly a bit anxious. If all the eccentrics were poisoned to death, it would be an incomprehensible loss to the Empire of Chu.

Chen Nan coldly snorted. "You best not measure me with your own standards. They have only temporarily lost their power."

In the end, Chen Nan still did not have enough experience under his belt in regards to humanity. He was still much too young and not at all hateful enough to poison to death all the eccentrics from Chu. Even though he was nearing combat, he still didn't act unscrupulously.

In a moment, Chu Yue's expression turned ashen. She shouted, "All high

level warriors from the imperial palace heed my order: kill this traitor at all costs!"

Ten warriors with profound cultivation from the imperial palace entered the scene. A forceful pressure exploded out from their bodies.

Chen Nan loudly shouted, "Who dares take action? I'll immediately seize their life!" He brought Houyi Bow out. A plumed arrow was already nocked to the bowstring.

Among the warriors that had arrived from the imperial palace, a man who seemed to be their leader loudly said, "Don't be scared, we'll attack together. One arrow can only shoot down one ma—"

"Honglonglong!"

The weather turned and the world paled! With the rumbling of thunder, the Godly Houyi Bow's bowstring lightly quivered. A golden arrow shot out like lightning.

The cultivation of the current Chen Nan was incomparable to that of the Chen Nan of the past. The power of this golden arrow was many times greater than that of the arrow he had shot at the western borders of Chu. That lustre that seized the eyes left everyone's heart palpitating fearfully. The arrow seemed like a tyrannical dragon leaving the sea. The power expanded into every direction. The greatest, strongest pressure left everyone in a several li circumference unable to breathe. In the blink of an eye, the golden arrow plunged into the chest of the leader of the warriors. In an instant, the warrior burst into pieces. The only thing left of him was a mist of his blood in the air. The prickling, bloody scent was

nauseating.

The remaining power and momentum of this arrow was vast. A tremendous wave of energy, like an explosive, wild tsunami, spread throughout the Sima Residence. The terrifying wave of energy pushed back all the onlookers. They were unable to remain on their feet and were blown to the ground.

If not for the Eldest Princess Chu Yue timely supporting him up, the Emperor of Chu would have tumbled straight onto his back. For the sake of supporting the empress up, the Little Princess was blown to the ground. She angrily cursed, "Damn degenerate, aiyah~!"

Because the eccentrics from the Residence of Eccentrics had had their power temporarily restrained, they were also blown to the ground.

Only a few experts were unaffected and stood in their original positions. They angrily stared at Chen Nan.

The guests of the Sima Residence were all aristocrats from the imperial capital. The power of the golden arrow had left them utterly beaten. It could be said that, today, they have lost face. The cries from those wealthy aristocrats and their ladies unceasingly rang out. The scene was entirely chaotic.

If news of this event spread to other countries, the Empire of Chu would lose face. They would definitely be laughed at.

When everyone got up off the ground and settled down, they all angrily

fixed their sights on Chen Nan.

At this instant, there was not a sound to be heard—the crows and sparrows were silent. Everyone was trying to catch their breaths. The recent development made those warriors from the imperial palace, who were just about to advance forward, stop in their tracks.

Chen Nan nocked a second arrow to the bowstring. Wherever it aimed, everyone would pale. Finally, he moved his aim from Sima Lingkong to the emperor.

From behind, Nalan Ruoshui anxiously cried out, "Chen Nan, what are you doing?"

Chen Nan didn't respond to her. Instead, he said to Chu Han, "Let me and Ruoshui leave."

Chu Han nodded. "I didn't think something like this would happen. Fine, you two may leave. Everyone, move aside."

Sima Lingkong's fury reached new heights. His eyes were bloodshot. Just now, he had received severe internal injuries. Those injuries, in tandem with his anger, caused him to vomit three mouthfuls of blood in quick succession with a "Wa!" The people supporting him brought him away.

Chen Nan rested Houyi Bow and gestured to Nalan Ruoshui to leave.

When they arrived outside of the Sima Residence, Nalan Ruoshui said,

"Chen Nan, I truly can't leave with you."

"Why not?"

"I can't just walk away from my problems. After I leave, what will happen to my father? What will happen to my family? They will all lose face."

"They are only sacrificing some face, that's all. Do you wish to sacrifice a lifetime of happiness instead?"

Nalan Ruoshui shook her head. "This marriage can already no longer proceed. You don't have to worry about me any longer."

Chen Nan said, "Why aren't you willing to leave with me?"

Nalan Ruoshui seemed to be at a bit of a loss. "You and the ordinary Chen Nan from the past are so far apart, I am somewhat scared. I can't see a future between us... Besides, I cannot only consider myself, I also have my parents and my family..."

"Chen Nan, be careful!" cried Nalan Ruoshui.

The splendid flash of a shimmering sword that seemed to be perfectly forged chopped towards Chen Nan. In a flash, it snapped the plumed arrow nocked to the bowstring. Chen Nan's pupils contracted. He already saw that it was a Daoist's flying sword. The master of the flying sword was the Eldest Princess Chu Yue. Leaving behind an afterimage, Chen Nan moved like lightning and dashed one zhang horizontally. Afterwards, he

quickly unsheathed his long knife, hacking towards that flying sword.

All the onlookers cried out:

“Flying sword!”

“The most mysterious practitioner of them all, a Daoist!”

“It’s Her Highness the Eldest Princess!”

...

The cold light flickering off the glorious flying sword was oppressive.

Chen Nan slashed his knife forward, but his blade of light was unexpectedly unable to resist the power of the flying sword. He ultimately brandished the long knife to directly defend against the flying sword directly.

“Dingdingdangdang!”

After the cry of metal meeting metal, the long knife was actually crushed into various fragments. Only the bare handle of the knife remained in his hand. Chen Nan was inwardly fearful. He secretly sighed, “Daoists truly are out of the ordinary.” He dodged the edge of the sword. With his palms, he swatted the spine of the sword. When the flesh of his palm touched the flying sword, an unexpected ‘kengqiang’ sounded.

This series of movements were as fast as lightning. Onlookers could only see a sword edge interweaving with the afterimages of palm strikes. A bright flash accompanied the 'kengqiang' sounds of the collisions. Tremendous waves of energy wildly blasted around.

When the high ranked warriors responded to the situation and readied themselves to rush forward, the Eldest Princess already no longer had the same tenacity as before. Her face was pale, and she unwillingly withdrew her flying sword.

When Chen Nan wanted to pursue her, the group of high ranked warriors hindered him. He quickly stopped in his tracks and once again took out Houyi Bow. He aimed the plumed arrow straight at the Emperor of Chu. Everyone was dumbstruck and was forced to a halt.

"Ruoshui, come with me."

"No, I..." Nalan Ruoshui shook her head. "Chen Nan, I sincerely thank you for everything you have done for me today. You needn't worry about me. Perhaps in the future, we can meet again one day..." Nalan Ruoshui didn't continue speaking. She quickly sprinted into the crowd and disappeared from his vision in an instant.

Chen Nan was momentarily stunned, before angrily confronting the Eldest Princess Chu Yue. He pulled back the bowstring in preparation and aimed Houyi Bow at her. "You have the impertinence to sneak attack me, today, I will—"

Suddenly, an aged sigh echoed at his ear side. "Ai, youngster, don't be so emotional. She is my great-great-grandson's daughter!"

Chen Nan was startled, but soon sobered up. He was all too familiar with this voice. It was unexpectedly the voice of the emperor's great-great-grandfather, that old monster over a hundred and seventy years old. He knew that old monster had just used a profound martial skill to transmit his voice to him.

The old monster sighed. "In a lifetime, you're bound to encounter many matters that do not live up to your expectations. Actually, there is no eternal happiness in this world, nor is there eternal regret. Eternity is no more than the blink of an eye. When your pretentiousness lessens and you turn old, you'll realize that the most important thing in life is a placid mindset."

The voice gradually disappeared. Chen Nan looked around, but he couldn't see a trace of the old monster. Although he had Houyi Bow at hand, he still was deeply concerned over this incredibly mysterious old man and wanted to avoid him. If the old man were to launch a sneak attack on him, there would be no way he would be able to resist.

Chen Nan had already drawn back Houyi Bow, but due to his misgivings towards the old monster, he was forced to aim Houyi Bow back towards the ground. With a thundering of the wind, the golden arrow plunged deep into the ground. The earth violently quaked. Over half of the buildings in the Sima Residence collapsed with a rumble. Dust and smoke pervaded the sky. Soil was shot every which way.

No one knew that this arrow that was shot underground was gradually changing in trajectory. The golden arrow fired off towards the nearby imperial palace. Then, it shot to that ancient tomb underneath the imperial library's room of ancient texts. The golden arrow seemed to be

attracted to the accumulated original vital qi from the world—it flew directly towards that passed away peerless expert in the tomb. Three chi away from the inextinguishable body, the arrow abruptly exploded into bountiful specks of golden light that forced their way into the inextinguishable body. Afterwards, the ancient tomb regained its peacefulness. It seemed like nothing had happened.

As everyone was in disarray, Chen Nan used the Capturing Dragon Hand again. The golden palm brought about a violent gust of wind out of nothing and swept towards the Little Princess Chu Yu beside the empress, pulling her towards him. He instantly hit several of the Little Princess's acupoints and held her against his chest. With Houyi Bow in his right hand, he gripped the Little Princess's throat with his left.

Sima father and son nearly went mad. Chen Nan had not only ruined the wedding, but he had also laid waste to the entire Sima Residence.

"Degenerate, smelly thief, let go of me~!"

The expressions of the emperor, empress, and others all turned terrible. The Eldest Princess said, "Chen Nan, release my meimei. I'll guarantee you can safely leave."

Chen Nan remained unmoving. He didn't do anything at all. Actually, he was seeing whether or not that hidden old monster would come out from the shadows and take action. After waiting for a long while, there still wasn't any news of that old monster, so his worrying heart eased a smidgen.

The Little Princess cried out, "Smelly thief, take your hands off me! It's

unbearably putrid."

The Eldest Princess Chu Yue said, "Chen Nan, did you hear what I said? Release my meimei, and I'll allow you to leave."

Chen Nan coldly laughed, "Hmph. I don't want to talk too much bullshit. Have everyone get the hell out of my way. Don't send anyone after me."

Chu Yue's enraged face took another, and another, drastic turn as she considered this request. Finally, she said, "Fine, I agree to your request."

At the side, the empress was exceedingly anxious. She wanted to speak up, but Chu Han stopped her and said, "Trust Yue'er. Let her handle this."

The officials of the court were as dazed as stupid chickens. The things that had happened today were beyond their imaginations.

Although Chen Nan was not too familiar with Chu, he had scouted out a clear escape route outside of the city long ago. He seized the Little Princess and they fled from the imperial capital.

The Little Princess was seething. "Degenerate, you've already gotten away. Why haven't you released me yet?"

"Life truly is fantastic! Originally, it was you who captured me and brought me to the imperial capital. Now, it's you who will send me off from the imperial capital. I don't think you'll forget about the events that have happened in this period of time, right? You'll remain by my side,

obediently serving as my maid!"

"What? Having I, a princess, to serve as a degenerate's maid? You're dreaming!"

Chen Nan did something he had wanted to do for a long time, but he had not the opportunity to do so until now. With strength, he pinched the Little Princess's delicate, smooth cheeks. He pinched them fiercely!

The Little Princess painfully shouted, "Aiyah~! Degenerate, you bastard! Let me go! You dare treat me like this?"

"You little demon, I know how especially devious you are. Don't play any tricks on me. Be good on our journey."

"You bastard, where are you bringing me?"

"The City of Crime."

"Ah~!"

"I truly did not expect you, the little demon, to once again fall into my clutches."

Chen Nan's heart was slightly at a loss. With the Little Princess Chu Yu in his possession, he departed from the capital city of the Empire of Chu.

## Volume 3 Chapter 1: Princess Coming Across Misfortune

Although Chen Nan had rushed into a cataclysmic situation at the imperial capital, he wasn't the least bit scared. With the Little Princess—heaven's proud daughter—in his possession, he wasn't worried about the people in pursuit of them causing him any difficult problems.

The only person he was concerned about was the emperor's great-great-grandfather, that one hundred and seventy year old monster. The old monster's terrifying cultivation was unfathomable, and he did not want anything to do with it.

The princess was wedged against Chen Nan's ribs. Her heart grew enraged, but with her acupoints sealed, all she could do was curse him in protest.

"Damn degenerate, if you still refuse to let me down, I'll commit suicide by biting off my tongue."

"Well then bite it off. The earlier you do it, the earlier this world will become considerably more peaceful."

"Smelly thief, damn smelly thief, how dare you treat me like this? If I really did commit suicide by biting off my own tongue, you'd be killed and left without a proper burial site. Every passing moment, there would be someone chasing after you to kill you."

"The lives of good people are short, while the terrible consequences of bad people can be timeless. Little demon, if you died right now and don't

end up reuniting with your demonic brethren in hell, then that'd be a miracle."

"You..."

"What about me? Hurry up and commit suicide, already. I'm begging you."

The princess furiously clenched her teeth. She heatedly said, "Smelly thief, you actually urged me to kill myself, I hate you to death. Sooner or later, I'll kill you one day. Not only that, but I'll use the most ruthless and callous methods to do so. I'll hack you into a million pieces, I'll rip out all of your tendons and skin, I'll break every finger and slice off every toe..."

Chen Nan squeezed the princess's slender waist and said, "You little demon, you're too vicious. If you act like this, how can you serve as my maid? On our journey, I must properly train you."

The Little Princess was painfully squished in Chen Nan's arms. She cried out, "Degenerate, you deserve to die. Hurry and take your hands off me, it hurts me to death."

The weather was blazingly scorching. The painful heat from the sun roasted and baked the ground. The leaves of the trees were rendered listless, drooping without any signs of vitality. Only the cicadas were 'joyful and lively', 'endlessly singing'.

After the princess's cultivation had been sealed by Chen Nan, it grew increasingly difficult for her to resist the sizzling hot summertime heat.

Drop after drop of perspiration flowed down her cheeks.

"Damn degenerate, I'm boiling to death. Hurry up and bring me to the shade underneath the trees."

Currently, the two of them had already traversed a distance of five li from the imperial capital. After they walked into a forest, he let the princess down and said, "Little demon, you have to understand: right now, I am the butcher's knife, you are the fish meat. Henceforth you are no longer a princess. You are now my personal maid, understand? From now on, you must be obedient."

Hearing these words, the princess was livid. She fiercely took a bite of his shoulder.

Chen Nan rushed to pinch her chin up. "Truly terrifying. This won't do; if you continue to be insincere, then I may lose my tender feelings for you."

The princess was both hateful and angered, but at the same time, she was also a bit scared. She never imagined she'd fall into the hands of Chen Nan again. She considered the last time Chen Nan had captured her to be an unprecedented, shameful humiliation. Now that she had fallen into his hands again, she nearly went insane.

Fuming, she turned her head to the side. She didn't want to look at his repulsive face any longer. Simultaneously, she incessantly cursed him in her mind.

The verdant leaves and thick branches screened them from the

smoldering sun. A light breeze gently swept through the trees, carrying along with it the relaxing fragrance of flowers and fresh grass.

Chen Nan reclined on the soft meadow. Content, he squeezed his eyes shut. During the battle just now, he had consumed quite a bit of power. He needed to rest for a while.

Although the Little Princess was currently able to move around on her own, her power was still sealed. Even if she fled, she wouldn't flee successfully. She sat down with her back facing Chen Nan. She ripped up some unknown flowers out of the ground and shredded them to pieces in order to vent out her rancour and resentment towards Chen Nan.

About an hour passed like this. Chen Nan remained motionless, pretending like he was still asleep.

The princess carefully observed the repulsive guy lying on the ground. After seeing him still remain motionless for another fifteen minutes, she cautiously stood up and furtively snuck away from the forest.

Right then, that repulsive voice rang out: "It's so comfortable here. If someone were unwilling to stay in the trees, I would definitely satisfy her wish and allow her to sunbathe."

Angered, the Little Princess threw a fist that flashed passed Chen Nan's face. Extraordinarily unwilling, she sat down again.

All of the sudden, Chen Nan sat up and brought the princess into his bosom. One hand snaked around her throat. He shouted to outside the

forest, "The people outside the forest, immediately show yourselves! If you continue to sneak around in the dark, don't blame me for being rude to your princess."

The Little Princess quietly cursed Chen Nan and muttered, "What idiots for them to actually be discovered by this guy. Why not send some real experts to come rescue me, the princess?"

The figures of seven martial artists emerged from behind the trees. The cultivation of these people really weren't too high, and Chen Nan was in peak condition, so the instant they had approached Chen Nan and the princess, he had already detected their aura.

"There are others. If you still refuse to come out, I'll truly act rudely." With that said, he tightly pinched the princess's smooth cheeks, making her screech, "Smelly thief, degenerate, you..."

A burst of magical elements came through the air. A magus came out of a tree with a hovering spell and landed on the ground.

Chen Nan creased his eyebrows. He had originally thought that after pacifying those eccentrics from the Residence of Eccentrics, the imperial capital wouldn't have any other experts. But that didn't seem to be the case. These several people were ranked experts. In fact, there was an old man whose cultivation was not inferior to his own.

"Do you guys still wish to keep this little demon's life? If you keep sneaking around following me, don't blame me for acting impolite."

Among the people that had emerged from the trees, the magus said, "His Majesty has already bestowed upon you the title of Eccentric Protector of the Nation, but you are rebelling against him like—"

Chen Nan interrupted his words. "Don't speak so many lies. Are you guys going to leave, or not?"

The old martial artist who had the greatest cultivation among them said, "Chen Nan, don't take action. We shall immediately depart from here."

Just then, the ground suddenly began to quake. Vast amounts of smoke and dust pervaded the air above the roads outside the forest. Countless armoured cavalrymen were rushing here.

There was a ruckus as thousands of cavalrymen encircled the forest.

On the road, a peerlessly magnificent woman sat upright atop a white dragon horse. The smoke and dust struggled to conceal her gorgeous complexion. The person who had just arrived was the Eldest Princess Chu Yue. She dismounted from her horse with a leap and directly strode into the forest. She carried on her face a faint look of fury.

"Chen Nan, since you have already escaped from the imperial capital, why have you not released my meimei yet?" She glanced at the Little Princess, her gaze full of pity.

The Little Princess looked happy. She cried out, "Jiejie!"

Chen Nan reached out and sealed her mute acupoint. He said to Chu Yue, "If I had released her earlier, I'm afraid my corpse would be on the ground right now."

Chu Yue said, "You have Houyi Bow in your hands. Who dares to obstruct you? You can easily leave from this place without a fuss."

Chen Nan sneered. "One Houyi Bow can oppose how many soldiers and horses? If I used Houyi Bow to shoot someone related to the imperial family—nobility—or perhaps a major official of some border region, it would probably stun and shake the politics of the Chu court. What use would it be for me to shoot dead some run-of-the-mill soldier? At the imperial capital, I could use the Godly Houyi Bow to make the emperor and his officials cower in fear of my might, but after I leave the imperial capital, my advantage disappears. If I didn't have an important hostage in my hands, wouldn't I be trampled into mincemeat by the army after they caught up to me in the blink of an eye? Right now, I simply cannot afford to let your meimei go."

Chu Yue was somewhat anxious. "What do you need for you to agree to release Yu'er?"

"At the very least, I need to safely leave the borders of the Empire of Chu. And during this time, you mustn't send anyone in pursuit. If not, it'll be too late for you to regret."

Chu Yue clenched her jaw. She gingerly looked at the Little Princess and said to Chen Nan, "Fine, I agree to your terms. But you must guarantee that Yu'er doesn't feel wronged at all on your way. If not, I will issue the command for your death. I'll unleash all the power of my Great Chu to kill you!"

Chen Nan replied, "Since this is the case, I would like to ask you to lead your troops away from here promptly."

"When you leave the borders of my Empire of Chu, if you don't release Yu'er, you should know the consequences." With a final, deep look at the Little Princess, Chu Yue led everyone away from the forest.

Kicking up the dust and sand, the thousands of cavalrymen left in a cloud of smoke.

Chen Nan let go of the Little Princess. He reached out and released her mute acupoint.

Finally able to speak again, the princess began cursing. "Degenerate, smelly thief, pig head, how dare you actually seal my mute acupoint; I couldn't even say a word to my jiejie. You bastard, I curse you to the eighteenth—no—the nineteenth level of hell..."

Chen Nan corralled her back towards him. With one hand, he pushed up her chin. "You're my captive, now. If you still dare to challenge me, don't blame me for being impolite."

The Little Princess shrieked, "Damn degenerate, smelly thug, what the hell are you doing?" She quickly struggled to break free from Chen Nan's grasp on her chin. After creating a distance of four, five meters between them, she stopped. Her face had a nice red blush. She angrily said, "Sooner or later, I'll kill you..."

Chen Nan maliciously said, "If you refuse to be obedient, tonight, I'll have you accompany me as I sleep."

Sure enough, the princess was frightened enough to put a stop to her loud discord.

Chen Nan laughed. "You should've acted like this earlier. What kind of girl is loud and annoying?"

The princess hatefully gazed at him before turning her head to the side.

Although Chen Nan had seized the princess and fled here, a hint of concern had continuously remained in his heart. The emperor's great-great-grandfather, that one hundred and seventy year old monster, made it impossible for him to feel safe. After a period of rest among the trees, he dragged the Little Princess back onto the road. This time, he didn't squish her between his ribs. Instead, he permitted her to walk on her own. He followed behind her closely.

The Little Princess bemoaned her circumstances over and over again until dusk. By then, they had arrived at a small town one hundred li away from the imperial capital to take a break. After booking an inn room and eating dinner, when he brought the Little Princess into the room, she was scared senseless, a look of panic written across her entire face.

With a quivering voice, she said, "Damn degenerate, you... Don't do anything to me, or else my jiejie... my father the emperor won't let you off..."

Chen Nan had a ridiculing expression. Although his mind wasn't harbouring any despicable thoughts, he still didn't relinquish the chance to tease the princess. With a gulp of some tea, he said, "Obedient little maid, make the bed for me."

"You... Sooner or later, I'll kill you." The princess was angered, but her face was ghastly.

Chen Nan said, "If you don't want me to do anything to you, you had better do what I say without delay."

With a vicious glance at him, she very unwillingly dragged herself to the bedside. She carelessly spread out a bamboo sleeping mat on top of the bed. "There. Are you happy now?" With that said, she sat down at the side, enraged.

"Seeing your gorgeous complexion as your slender, jade-like hands unexpectedly spread out the mat in that rough, crude way is really—"

The Little Princess angrily said, "Enough. Damn degenerate, I've had enough of you. No one has ever dared to provoke me like this. You are much too unreasonable and wanton to have a princess like me make your bed. Don't forget the words of my jiejie: if I feel wronged at all, you'll be left dead without a proper burial site!"

"Hehe..." Chen Nan laughed out loud. "Wronging you is exactly what I aspire to do. Let's see what your jiejie will do about it."

"Damn degenerate, sooner or later, I'll arrest you and have you become

a eunuch of the palace." The princess was exploding with rage. She was simply going insane.

"Little demon, you are indeed very sinister. Hmph, I'm afraid you'll never have that sort of opportunity. In this lifetime, you will serve as my obedient maid. Alright, don't be noisy. Go sleep on the other bed. We must hurry and set off tomorrow morning."

The Little Princess was fuming. She hatefully said, "No way. You must give me a separate room to sleep in. I am a princess of Chu, how can I wantonly stay in the same room as a man?"

Chen Nan said, "Little demon, when you get an inch, don't ask for a mile. If you refuse to properly sleep on the other bed, then just simply come sleep beside me."

Hearing these words, the princess paled in fright.

Suddenly, an intense feeling of unease erupted in Chen Nan's heart. He felt like there was an expert with terrifying cultivation observing him from the darkness. But when he carefully tried to examine it, that feeling instantaneously vanished without a trace.

"Did that old monster really follow us? Why hasn't he done anything all this time?" A seed of doubt was planted in his heart. Gritting his teeth, he came to a secret decision.

Chen Nan arrived beside the princess who was currently pissed off. With strikes at breakneck speed, he sealed several of her major acupoints,

immobilizing her body and sealing her mouth shut.

The Little Princess began panicking. A look of dread was evident in her eyes.

Chen Nan looked completely focussed. The vital qi within his body began turbulently surging. A faint, golden light was released from his body. He concentrated his power to his fingers. Specks of faint, golden light with the width of a hairsbreadth coalesced at his fingertips. All ten of his fingers began dazzling and sparkling in an instant. Their radiance was blinding.

The words of his father from a time long past echoed through his ears: "The God of Imprisonment's Finger can seal someone's power and lock the essence of their blood. If the user of this technique does not neutralize the effect on the victim in a timely fashion, then within a fortnight, their blood vessels will face desiccation and they will die. You must use caution! The power of this finger method is boundless. At the highest level, it can even seal immortals, but if you have insufficient power, you cannot rashly use this technique no matter what. Otherwise, you risk crippling your own constitution."

Chen Nan was not fully confident in his decision. He wasn't sure if he was able to smoothly use the God of Imprisonment's Finger at his current level of cultivation, but the pressure being exerted on him by the old monster was too much. It was enough to force Chen Nan into taking a risk.

After circulating his power throughout his body nine times, both of his hands simultaneously moved. His golden vital qi came out from his fingertips and entered the Little Princess's body with endless 'bipa'

sounds. The golden light caused the entire room to be illuminated in a flickering gold.

Chen Nan felt the creeping exhaustion attacking him. Perspiration ran down the side of his pale face drip by drip. After the last of his vital qi penetrated into the Little Princess's body, he was utterly exhausted. Without any remaining strength, he gently collapsed to the floor.

He finally recovered a bit of his energy after a long period of time—it was barely enough for him to sit up on the ground. Feeling that his body was incomparably weak, he began to meditate and harmonize his breathing right away. He opened his eyes after two hours of meditation.

Chen Nan inwardly said, "I've finally succeeded. I'm afraid I won't be able to fight with anyone for the next few days. I only wish that the old monster's phenomenal power is insufficient in breaking through the power of the God of Imprisonment's Finger."

After leaving the imperial capital, the Little Princess was his only protective talisman. As long as the princess was firmly under his control, he'd be able to escape from the Empire of Chu. The princess had clearly watched Chen Nan do some unknown thing to her. Although she didn't know what it was, she knew it definitely wasn't anything good. Her heart filled with rage. Seeing Chen Nan's weak appearance, she couldn't help but perk up at his evident hardship.

Chen Nan walked over to her, unsealed her mute acupoint, and said, "Little demon, don't be happy at my discomfort. If I come across an abrupt accident, you're screwed. I have already used the God of Imprisonment's Finger against you. In this world, other than myself, there is no one that can help you neutralize its effect. Within a fortnight, if I

don't cleanse your blood essence, your blood vessels will be met with desiccation and you'll die."

Hearing his words, the princess's face turned tragic. She angrily said, "Degenerate, you're too vicious. There are no grievances or enmity between us, yet you have actually used some rotten finger technique against me. You're utterly despicable, without any morals whatsoever, thoroughly disgusting, and absolutely shameless!"

"Little girl, with a mouth this coarse, I really can't tell if you were truly raised in the imperial palace. If you dare curse at me again, this will be the result." With that said, he raised his palm and sliced off half of the table's corner. Then, he used the same palm to pinch the Little Princess's jade face.

The princess painfully shrieked, "Ah! You smelly thug!"

After Chen Nan threw the princess onto the bed, he lied down on the other bed. He wasn't concerned about anyone secretly coming in; ever since his spiritual awareness had returned, his six senses had sharpened beyond compare. The instant danger approached him, he was able to detect it one step earlier.

After the battle at the imperial palace, he turned into the public enemy of the Empire of Chu. He lamented in his heart, "Ai, I've actually offended an entire nation!"

Nalan Ruoshui hadn't left the imperial capital with him, but his heart was completely free from misery. Recalling the experiences of the past few months, he grew somewhat absent-minded. With a final flash, the

candlelight blew out. The moonlight shone into the room like a stream of water, and Chen Nan entered the realm of dreams. The Little Princess had already fallen asleep, but her mouth pouted even in her sound dreams, as if she was upset with the rude antics Chen Nan had pulled during the daytime.

Meanwhile, within the imperial palace of Chu, the empress was currently wailing. She sobbed, "My pitiful Yu'er... Wu... My good child..."

The emperor comfortingly soothed, "Don't cry, nothing will happen to Yu'er. Chen Nan doesn't dare cause trouble for her."

At the side, the Eldest Princess Chu Yue said, "Now that all the eccentrics have become strangely poisoned, no one can take action for the time being. If we dispatched some men to go rescue my meimei, I'm afraid it'll only scare the snake off because of our hitting the grass. I fear too much time has already passed to summon the super experts from other places to come assist us. For now, we can only request Elder Zhuge Chengfeng to leave his seclusion prematurely."

Although Chu Han was an emperor, his speech carried an air of respect towards Zhuge Chengfeng. "Although Zhuge Chengfeng is an exceptional expert, he was seriously injured by that mythical qilin and has gone into seclusion. I'm afraid it is not appropriate to disturb him right now."

After the empress heard this, she said with a hopeful expression, "Do you know where this elder is recuperating?"

Chu Yue said, "Actually, Elder Zhuge has been recuperating within the palace all along."

The empress was jubilant. "Tomorrow, we must request the help of Zhuge Chengfeng no matter what. I truly cannot stop worrying about Yu'er."

Chu Han exhaled a breath of air. "Then we're forced to do it like this."

The ten thousand flutes were silent. The night was especially serene. Everyone was busily entering the realm of dreams.

A green light as fast as lightning arrived at the small town Chen Nan was staying at. Within the green light was a thin, emaciated figure. With a few flashes, that insipid figure among the green light floated into the inn—directly arriving outside the door of Chen Nan's room.

The door was pushed open without so much of a sound or breath. The emaciated figure flashed into the room. The sleeping Chen Nan appeared to be none the wiser. Specks of golden light suffused from his body. With a start, the intruder left in a green flash. A void seemed to emerge from his body. The moonlight that struck his body also vanished into nothingness, leaving behind no trace of its existence. It was perfectly dark. There was not a single ray of light or hint of sound.

The golden light surrounding Chen Nan's body slowly began to fade away, failing to illicit a proper response.

The intruder seemed to vanish into the darkness. There was only a lightless void slowly moving around in the room. Houyi Bow floated into the air. Then, the Little Princess—sound asleep—also floated into the air. As if there was some sort of attraction, they quickly flew towards the void.

In the blink of an eye, they vanished into that dark domain.

After the door was closed soundlessly, the moonlight water streamed back into the room. However, Houyi Bow that had been placed on Chen Nan's bed and the Little Princess who had been asleep on the other bed had already vanished without a trace.

The green light departed from the small town like lightning. In the wilderness outside of town, it halted. The insipid green light seemed like a ghostly lantern of the netherworld. The emaciated figure in the green light touched several of the Little Princess's acupoints. It stretched out its hands and continuously slapped at her with endless 'bipa' sounds. Like water, the green light surged inside of the Little Princess's body.

An hour passed like this. The emaciated figure finally stopped its movement. Carrying the Little Princess, he brought her back to the small town. A ghostly green light appeared within Chen Nan's room. After the Little Princess hovered back over to the bed, the green light vanished without a trace.

Early the next morning, Chen Nan awakened and was stunned. Houyi Bow had disappeared. His innate spiritual awareness had actually failed its purpose. He hadn't been aware of the events that had conspired the night prior at all. If the intruder had wanted to seize his life, it would have taken no extra effort. Alarmed, his body broke out into a cold sweat. He rapidly turned his gaze towards the Little Princess's bed, only to find the princess still sound asleep. His heart calmed a sliver.

After washing up, he released the Little Princess's acupoints and roused her from her slumber.

"Annoying. Who dares to disturb me, the princess, from her rest...?" The princess was clearly still groggy. When she regained her bearings, she pushed away Chen Nan and nervously said, "Degenerate, what do you want?"

"I'm telling you to get out of bed." Chen Nan spoke as he investigated the Little Princess's internal aura. He soon discovered from his probing that there had been someone who had attempted to neutralize the power of his God of Imprisonment's Finger—but they had been met with failure.

"Little demon, hurry and wash up." With that said, he walked into the courtyard.

"The intruder was unexpectedly able to get into my room soundlessly and evade my spiritual awareness. I fear their cultivation surpasses the five ranks by many times, or else there's no way I wouldn't have detected them. Most likely, it was that old monster, without a doubt. But why would he need to act so secretly?" Chen Nan recalled all kinds of things pertaining to the old monster. He realized that all along, he had been impossible to unravel. It was impossible for others to see through him, to examine him clearly.

"Since the beginning up until now, he has seemed to be conspiring against me somewhat. If not, he absolutely wouldn't allow me to revolt against the Empire of Chu. But what the hell does he want from me?" Even thinking over it a thousand times would be unfruitful, but there was one point he was certain of. For the time being, the old monster would not act maliciously against him. This thought helped mollify his hectic mind.

## Volume 3 Chapter 2: Crossing the Western Border of Chu

Within the imperial palace of Chu, Emperor Chu Han and the Eldest Princess Chu Yue were standing inside the imperial study looking at Houyi Bow, utterly astounded. They never imagined in their wildest of dreams that Houyi Bow would be returned to the imperial palace by someone completely wordlessly.

Chu Yue said, "Father, look. There's a letter underneath Houyi Bow."

Chu Han unfolded the letter. After reading the letter, he tightly furrowed his eyebrows before gradually relaxing them.

After Chu Yue gave the letter a read, she joyfully exclaimed, "So it's actually our old ancestor's doing from behind-the-scenes. He wishes to wander around the continent. With his appearance, Yu'er will surely be fine."

Chu Han said, "I'm afraid Yu'er won't be returning for a while. I am unsure whether she can adapt to life outside of the palace."

Chu Yue said, "My meimei is very naughty; she normally begs me to take her out. Now that she has left the imperial palace, she can be considered a fish returning to the water. Father, you need not worry about her."

Chu Han was somewhat forlorn. "Now that he has appeared, of course I don't have to worry about her. Only... your second brother Wenfeng has already been away for the past few years. Now that my mischievous little

girl has also left, of the three children I am most fond of, only you remain by my side."

Chu Yue soothed, "Sooner or later, gege and meimei will return to father's side, so you need not feel sad."

Chu Han grumbled, "En. Actually, this should be beneficial to that mischievous little girl. She's too naughty. After going through this experience and refining herself through hardships, she will definitely mature a lot." After he deeply pondered over something, he said, "Don't disturb Elder Zhuge for now. Seal all news of Chen Nan's havoc in the imperial capital as much as possible. No matter what, it cannot be divulged."

On the road, the Little Princess discovered that Houyi Bow was not on Chen Nan's person. She couldn't stop herself from endlessly questioning him about it. Chen Nan didn't respond at all to her inquiries. In the end, she determined that Chen Nan had hidden Houyi Bow away in some place near that inn.

With regards to the events that conspired the night before, she was completely ignorant. Seeing Chen Nan's absent-minded appearance, she mocked him. "Degenerate, seeing your worrying, despondent look, in your mind, you must be scared, right?"

Forgoing manners, Chen Nan flicked the Little Princess's bright forehead. "Scared of your head."

Grimacing in pain, the princess's eyes glistened with tears. She furiously said, "Damn degenerate, sooner or later, there will come a day you will

fall into my clutches again..."

Chen Nan patted the princess's fragrant shoulders. With 'sincere and heartfelt words', he said, "Wishing is fine, doing is complicated, but the outcome is impossible. Ai, it's the season of fantasies; the minds of young ladies are all filled with yearning. Pitiful child, wake up. That day will never come."

The Little Princess was angry and annoyed. She heatedly said, "Smelly thief, don't be so pleased with yourself. One day, I will make you regret the things you have said and done today."

Chen Nan laughed. "Little demon, don't act idiotic while under the spell of your own delusions. That day will never come."

Throughout the journey, the Little Princess and Chen Nan quarrelled endlessly. Simultaneously, she took advantage of every opportunity to try to sneak away, but she failed every single time.

In the beginning, Chen Nan had taken the princess and hurried along the path riding horses, but the princess was too attractive. She continuously raised the eyebrows of everyone who passed by them. For the sake of avoiding unnecessary trouble, they changed their mode of transportation and took a horse-drawn carriage instead. At the same time, he smeared dirt and filth all over the Little Princess's jade countenance. This resulted in the princess crying and cursing, but because of his threats, she finally settled with this happening.

A few days later, Chen Nan's weak body from using the God of Imprisonment's Finger finally recovered. He let out a long breath of air.

"There really hasn't been anyone at all following us the whole way. It must be because that old monster brought back Houyi Bow and notified Chu Yue and the others. The experts of the imperial capital didn't follow us. Most likely, that old monster himself is tailing us." Recalling the old monster's dreadful position, his heart chilled. He didn't even want to imagine if that old man was truly conspiring against him...

Chen Nan brought the princess with him as they headed straight to the west, unobstructed. The emperor hadn't sent anyone to pursue or stop them, to the extent that he didn't hear a single word of the chaotic things that he had done at the imperial capital.

"Little demon, your emperor daddy and princess jiejie have abandoned you. Not only did they not send anyone to rescue you, but they've sealed off all news of the imperial capital. It seems that they plan to give you to me."

The princess reclined back into the carriage. She glanced at him sideways and said, "Smelly thief, you're uneducated and incompetent. You can't even figure out this simple matter, yet you still have the nerve to speak rubbish, hmpf!"

"In their eyes, the reputation of the Empire of Chu is much more important than yours. If not, why would they only focus on sealing off the news from the imperial capital while completely ignoring you?"

"Hmph. I, the princess, will not even dignify you with an explanation, you despicable bastard."

"Do you want freedom? As long as you obediently listen to what I say, I'll give you freedom."

The princess took another sideways glance at him and then ignored him.

Throughout the journey, although Chen Nan didn't continuously put into practice his 'enslavement education', the stubborn Little Princess never gave him any flattering looks. This resulted in the shattering of his dream of the princess becoming an obedient maid.

Ten days later, the two of them arrived at Tantai City. There were two great roads here. One road went straight to the western border of Chu. The other road went straight to the south for several hundred li before turning towards the west, passing through the middle section of the continent that sheltered the City of Crime among the mountains. They proceeded towards the western continent.

Seeing the lifelike sculpture carved out of white jade standing tall in the public square of Tantai City, Chen Nan woefully sighed. It took ten thousand years for him to finally understand the cause of his power retreating instead of advancing. Everything was due to the goddess that he had worshipped in his heart.

"Tantai Xuan, the day I break through the void with my martial arts and ascend, I will definitely banish you to the realm of mortals!"

From the side, the Little Princess took a timely jab at him. "You're daydreaming. To go as far as to dare blaspheme Fairy Tantai like this, Fairy, honour us with your presence—hurry and strike him with black

lightning as punishment."

Seeing Chen Nan raise his hand, the princess rushed to cover her forehead. These past few days, her clear forehead had already been hit quite a number of times. Chen Nan didn't hit her. Pinching her straight, refined, exquisite nose, he said, "Still speaking rubbish? I'll pull at your nose until it becomes a pig's snout."

The princess painfully cried out, "Ouch! Smelly thief, hurry and let go..."

Chen Nan laughed. "Your nose feels pretty good."

"It hurts... Ow... Damn degenerate, I won't forgive you for this." The princess scratched and kicked, attracting the attention of everyone in the square. Chen Nan hurriedly let go.

The night they were residing within Tantai City, the powerful symptoms of the God of Imprisonment's Finger began to flare up in the Little Princess's body. Every inch of her flesh turned a glistening scarlet as a result of her engorged blood vessels. Within her body, the blood was circulating one hundred times faster than normal, as if it was boiling.

"Ah~! I can't bear it! Damn degenerate, hurry up and release that lousy finger technique that you cursed me with! I can't bear it!" Sweat soaked through the Little Princess's clothes. She continuously writhed on top of her bed.

Chen Nan poked several of her acupoints in order to stop her from flailing around. Only then was he able to uninterruptedlly slap at her

body. Golden light poured into her body. This continued for an hour.

After a long time, the harrowing symptoms that were caused by the God of Imprisonment's Finger began to gradually vanish. The body temperature of the princess slowly returned to normal.

"Degenerate, I'll return the favour!" When they Little Princess regained her ability to move, she pounced on Chen Nan in frenzy.

"I'll bite... I'll scratch... I'll kick... I'll slam..." Unable to bite, scratch, or kick Chen Nan, she ultimately slammed her head against Chen Nan.

Chen Nan didn't dare use his power, afraid of accidentally hurting the rabid princess. He was finally able to subdue her after expending quite of bit of effort. Then princess was gasping for air. "Smelly thief, I hate you to death. What kind of depraved finger technique did you use against me? You better immediately and thoroughly neutralize it for me."

Chen Nan said, "The power of the God of Imprisonment's Finger can only be neutralized by a single person in this world—me. Every ten days to half a month, it will flare up again. If I don't cleanse the essence of your blood in advance, every time it flares up, you will be in this kind of pain. Therefore, you have to obediently listen to what I say. Or else... Well, you know the consequences."

"Go die. Only ghosts will listen to your words, you smelly thief." The Little Princess grabbed a pillow and threw it at him. After that, she left to go clean up, upset.

"The project to cultivate a maid has failed yet again."

The next day, the two of them began their trek to the City of Crime early in the morning. The ancient city of Tantai gradually vanished behind them.

This great road linked the east and west. It was the continent's most significant road of business and commerce. The daily flow of travelling merchants was immense. The area surrounding the road was endlessly busy.

As they travelled, they ate in the wind and slept in the elements. The two of them finally arrived at the Empire of Chu's western portal—Wangfeng City. This city was lofty and firm. It was the stronghold at the bottleneck on the road connecting the east and the west.

The name of Wangfeng City possessed a lengthy history. Reportedly, when the first iteration of Wangfeng City was built, it had been during the great battle between the east and the west. It had a history that approached ten thousand years. The city had undoubtedly gone through myriad vicissitudes. The Wangfeng City in front of them had been constructed a thousand years ago. It had never changed its address since then, even up to the present. Instead, it continuously expanded from its original foundation by many folds.

Although there were rarely any conflicts that broke out between the east and the west in the past several millennia, regardless of which dynasty it belonged to, this city was deemed as a military stronghold. It possessed an extensive military force for protection. During the current peaceful era, the military soldiers within the city focussed on questioning the visiting travelling merchants, as well as inspecting and screening

their goods.

Prior to entering Wangfeng City, Chen Nan conducted a 'lesson on entering cities' with the princess. He threatened her to properly cooperate with those interrogative soldiers.

At the beginning, the Little Princess had laughed and sneered. She had proclaimed that she definitely would not put on an act for his repulsive self. But after a round of threats from Chen Nan, if she still refused to act a bit more 'sincerely' and something were to arise during the screening process, she would be disfigured. Furthermore, he would force the God of Imprisonment to flare up earlier than anticipated. The princess resentfully agreed to his terms.

Sure enough, when they entered the city, the two of them were met with rigorous interrogation. Fortunately, Chen Nan had already prepared beforehand. He had prepared a series of light lies in order to deceive and get past the questioning.

Naturally, there was a slight hiccup during this process. Despite the dirt that Chen Nan had caked onto the Little Princess's face, her natural beauty was just too difficult to conceal. As a result, it attracted the pawing of one of the soldiers. The angry girl almost exploded in rage. Chen Nan hurriedly threw down some gold coins and dragged the infuriated princess away.

Although Wangfeng City was a faraway fortress at the distant frontier, the inside of the city was incomparably prosperous. There was a profession within the city that was especially thriving—mercenaries.

Right outside Wangfeng City was the boundless mountains. On the road to the western continent, there were all kinds of vicious beasts. There were also a few intrepid bandits. Therefore, the people that regularly travelled this road all kept together in parties. In fact, a majority of these people even spent money to hire a few mercenaries in order to ensure the security of their lives and assets.

Chen Nan brought the Little Princess to a local mercenary union. Inside was noisy and chaotic. The walls were filled with all sorts of posted announcements. They were all missions of various scales and difficulties waiting for a mercenary to accept it. The easier ones involved acting as someone's bodyguard. The hardest ones involved investigating some extraordinarily dangerous locations.

Currently, the mission with the most expensive reward was to capture the mythical qilin in the Luofeng Mountain Range. There were already some people who had offered fifty thousand gold coins for its capture. The number of people who had accepted this mission was great, but to this day, not a single mercenary or company of mercenaries was able to succeed. The majority of them had gone off on the mission never to return. Now, very few people remained who were willing to accept this mission.

The employers that came here were usually people who wanted to go to either the City of Crime or the western continent. If they wanted to get by the bandits that plagued the road, several mercenaries were insufficient. Often, a whole group of people with the same desired destination would collectively hire a whole corps of mercenaries.

Carrying a large sword resting on his shoulder, a slovenly dressed, giant of a man with a face full of whiskers walked over to Chen Nan and said, "Brother, are you looking for a mercenary to serve as your bodyguard?

Select me; I am the most sensible option here. I am known as the 'King of Mercenaries'. I can ensure you a pleasant journey."

From the side, several other mercenaries also spoke up at the same time. "Pft... If you're the King of Mercenaries, then we're the Emperors of Mercenaries."

The big man restated, "Oh, I forgot to mention the word 'future'. I am the future King of Mercenaries."

Chen Nan could already see that this big man was indeed strong. His body's cultivation had already reached the level of the first rank. However, he wasn't sure why he would be willing to serve as some ordinary mercenary.

"Brother, how does it sound? Although I have only recently joined this party, I am definitely a prodigy among mercenaries. I will ensure you a worry-free journey. Although your little wife's face is covered in dirt, anyone with a discerning eye can tell that she is an exceptionally gorgeous woman with but a glance. If you fail to have someone with outstanding ability protecting the two of you, leaving Wangfeng City will be incredibly dangerous."

The Little Princess was extremely irritated. She furiously rebutted, "Big Moustache, don't say whatever drivel comes to your mind. Who is this degenerate's little wife? If you keep speaking rubbish, watch out for when I chop off your head."

The big man said, "Aiyah... What a ferocious little lady." With that, he turned his head to face Chen Nan. "Brother still hasn't succeeded yet. You

ought to do it when the opportunity arises. Otherwise, after leaving this village, you won't get another chance!"

Chen Nan chuckled. "She is currently still just my maid."

Faced with these two bad men, the Little Princess quickly grew insane with rage. She snatched the teapot off the table, flinging the teacups away. Chen Nan and the big man quickly dodged to the side, but other nearby patrons were not so lucky. The scalding tea was poured all over several of them, attracting a few raging curses from the victims inside the mercenary union. Chen Nan hurriedly dragged the Little Princess away to escape.

That big man whose face was covered in whiskers also followed them out. He yelled out to Chen Nan, "It's really too dangerous for the two of you to go out on your own. If you hired me, I can ensure you two a pleasant journey."

Chen Nan stopped in his tracks. "We wish to go to the City of Crime. I have heard that that road is littered with many bandits. Can you by yourself protect us from them?"

The big man said, "I can easily handle those mobs with just a single hand. What's more, it won't just be the three of us. A group of travelling merchants has hired a mercenary corps. I am very familiar with their chief, so we can leave with them. This will guarantee your safety."

Although Chen Nan did not fear those bandits on the road, now that he had to worry about the Little Princess, he wasn't entirely confident in himself. As insurance, he decided to embark on their journey with those

mercenaries.

"Alright. Tomorrow morning, we will come here to find you." With that said, he brought the fuming princess away.

The big man yelled after them, "Then it's settled."

After they returned to the inn, the Little Princess looked incredibly upset. She coldly said, "Smelly thief, you are about to leave the borders of Chu. You can help me neutralize the power of the God of Imprisonment's Finger now."

"Why so rushed? We haven't even arrived at the City of Crime yet."

"What? Have you forgotten what my jiejie had said? After you leave the borders of Chu, if you fail to release me, she will issue the command for your death. She will mobilize everything in order to kill you. You'll die without a proper burial site."

"Hmph. Me releasing you is only one possibility. Instead, how about I keep you by my side to serve as my maid."

This time, the Little Princess was truly frightened. With a trill voice, she said, "Degenerate, you're lying, right? There are no grievances or enmity between the two of us. Although there had been some... unpleasant things that have occurred between us, those were all... misunderstandings. Besides, it's already been a long time since then. You don't need to... have retribution, right?"

"Pa!"

Chen Nan reached out and hit her faint acupoint. With that, he released her onto the bed. Although Chen Nan's heart had always suppressed a trace of fear for the old monster who had yet to present himself, he felt safer with the Little Princess by his side. He was certain that despite the old monster's terrifying cultivation, he was still unable to release his God of Imprisonment's Finger. He inwardly rejoiced at the ingenuity of ancestral profound skill.

The next day, Chen Nan brought the princess to the mercenary union right on time.

A scowl was plastered across the Little Princess's face. She hatefully stared at Chen Nan, but felt dread in her heart at the same time. They were to leave the Empire of Chu soon. She was truly worried about losing her liberty afterwards.

After that big man saw the two of them, he immediately waved as he walked over to the duo. The princess gave him a greatly contemptuous look.

The big man didn't seem to care. He chuckled.

The caravan had altogether one hundred and three mercenaries in order to ensure their safety. Excluding the deputy chief of the corps, an old magus of the first rank, the rest were all martial artists.

The chief was a middle-aged man around forty years of age. He seemed

shrewd, yet experienced. There was a colossal beast behind him. Shockingly, it was a Land Dragon. The Land Dragon was about five zhang long. Pitch-black scales flickered in the light. Its appearance seemed rather vicious.

The big man said, "A first ranked magus, a first ranked dragon rider, and me, the future King of Mercenaries. Who dares provoke this party? I guarantee your safety on this trip."

Chen Nan asked, "How many gold coins does it cost?"

The big man said, "One hundred gold coins per person. Two people are discounted, so one hundred and eighty gold coins."

Chen Nan said, "You're robbing me. Ten gold coins are already enough for an ordinary family to live off of for a month. You're merely escorting us for a leg of our journey, so how can it still be this outrageously expensive?"

"Then how about one hundred and fifty gold coins?"

"No. Fifty."

"One hundred and twenty."

"No. Eighty."

...

The final negotiated price totalled one hundred gold coins. Chen Nan promptly paid him.

Right then, the chief of the hired corps of mercenaries walked over and said, "Guan Hao, you've already been hired and paid by eight people, yet you've just received another two. Although you are helping us, by bringing this many people to trail us, my brothers will start having objections."

Guan Hao said, "These are the last two."

After the chief of the hired corps left, Chen Nan, irritated, said, "Swindler, return my money."

Embarrassed, Guan Hao said, "This... Although there are many people, I guarantee your safe passage."

From the side, the Little Princess chimed in, "One degenerate and one swindler; neither of you are a good person."

Chen Nan shot her a glance before turning to face Guan Hao. "It's fine if you don't refund us, but when we leave the city, can you guarantee you're capable of keeping this girl silent?"

A light bulb went on over Guan Hao's head. "So you're a trafficker?"

"Refund me."

"Ah, my words are mistaken. Heihei, this matter is easy to handle. Isn't it only leaving the city? We just have to seal her mute acupoint and stuff her under the pile of merchandise."

The Little Princess's gaze was sharp enough to kill someone. She angrily said, "You two bastards—"

"Pa!"

Chen Nan hit her mute acupoint. Then, he turned to Guan Hao and said, "Are there any women among the travelling merchants?"

"There are."

"Leave her inside the carriage with those women. Otherwise, her delicate, tender body will be squished by the merchandise, which would be problematic."

In total, there were about forty or so people within the group of travelling merchants. There were over twenty carriages filled with goods. Adding on over one hundred mercenaries, this procession proved to be rather striking. With her mute acupoint sealed, the Little Princess rode in the same carriage as the women of the travelling merchants. Her mouth couldn't speak, and her body couldn't move. She could only sit upright inside the carriage.

From the side, the several womenfolk examined her and praised:

"This ill girl is really pretty. I've never seen a girl as beautiful as this."

"Right, she's really pretty."

"Her face is filthy, but that is definitely for the sake of protecting herself. She's really a clever girl."

"I really want to pinch her smooth, delicate cheeks."

In the end, the women truly began caressing the Little Princess's jade cheeks.

"If I had a daughter as pretty as this, that'd be amazing."

"Right, she's really too cute."

The Little Princess's lungs were about to explode in anger. She couldn't stop herself from panting with rage.

"Aiyah, this girl's illness has worsened."

"That doesn't seem right. How could her voice resemble angry panting?"

...

This squadron of men and horses very quickly arrived at the city gates.

After the travelling merchants donated several tens of gold coins, the interrogative soldiers stopped harassing the women.

It wasn't until they arrived very far away from the city gates did Chen Nan release the princess's acupoint. The instant she regained voluntary movement, she fled out of the carriage with what seemed like a leap. Afterwards, she loudly shrieked into the forest beside the road.

"Haha!" Chen Nan couldn't contain his hearty laughter.

"Damn degenerate, hurry up and release that lousy finger technique you placed on me and let me go."

"You're dreaming!"

Guan Hao walked over to them and said, "Little lady, don't shout. If you keep shouting, wolves will come."

"Y-you're not a good person either. Big Moustache, aren't you greedy for money? If you help me kill this degenerate, I'll pay you one hundred thousand gold coins."

Guan Hao gasped in alarm. "Wow! One hundred thousand gold coins! Such a large sum of wealth! However, someone with a noble character can choose to be avaricious in a virtuous way. This kind of illicit, ill-gotten wealth is something I can never accept."

"You miser, you swindler, you still have the face to talk about the virtuous way of making money? As long as you help me kill him, I'll give

you another hundred thousand gold coins."

With a 'dong', Chen Nan rapped the princess's forehead. "You actually dare ask someone to kill me in front of me? Don't treat me like air!"

With a pained yet hateful voice, the princess said, "Smelly thief, you deserve to be chopped into infinite pieces! Degenerate, sooner or later, you'll go to hell."

Chen Nan laughed. "Buddha says, 'If I don't go to hell, who will go to hell'."

"Well then go to hell right now."

"I have yet to become enlightened."

"Shameless degenerate, smelly thief..."

The travelling merchants and the hired mercenaries all raised their eyebrows at this scene. With surprised expressions, they looked over at this couple.

In the following few days, everyone became accustomed to the sound of the two of them bickering. If no one were to hear their quarrelling for half a day, everyone would be baffled.

### Chapter 3: Tiger King Sprouting Wings 生翼虎王

The winding road connecting the east and the west rambled through the mountains. Traversing this passage was a challenge. Sometimes, it passed through tunnels and caves. At other times, you'd have to hike up half a mountain. The mercenary company and travelling merchants journeyed through the boundless mountains.

Every day, the Little Princess would be noisy and rambunctious. She had already gotten over her moodiness from a few days prior. The continuous, unending mountain range was blooming and verdant throughout all four seasons of the year. The mountains were filled with all kinds of unknown and unheard of rare things. Most of her attention was focussed on those rare, exotic beasts.

As they travelled, she plucked many vibrantly coloured wild flowers and picked many refreshing wild fruits. Once in a while, she would scream in fear when an exotic animal suddenly pounced out of the forest and onto the road.

The beautiful landscapes and splendid trip caused the princess to gradually forget about her status as a captive. As the journey progressed, she found that this sort of wandering lifestyle was increasingly more enjoyable. Of course, only the Little Princess, the heavenly daughter who rarely left the imperial palace of royalty, would feel this way.

There were indeed some bandits who appeared on the road, but confronted with the attacks from the formidable first ranked magus and

the terrifying Land Dragon Rider, those gangs were very rapidly obliterated.

For the Little Princess who wanted to watch a good show, this was very dissatisfying. She repeatedly scolded those bandits for being useless. The merchants and mercenary corps looked at each other in dismay upon hearing her words. They even cleaned out their ears, suspecting that there was a problem with their hearing.

Later, whenever Chen Nan snapped his fingers, the princess would painfully groan. Those with ability would look towards them, inwardly sighing at how truly 'unusual' this girl was.

Neither dragons nor ancient giants presented themselves en route. Only a few magical beasts from the west appeared, but they were all immediately dealt with by Big Moustache Guan Hao. Whenever he fetched the magicite core from within the corpses of the magical beasts, the Little Princess would curse at him for being such a ruthless miser.

After an explanation from the mercenary company's chief, Chen Nan understood that Guan Hao absolutely wasn't rapacious. He desired to study profound skills at Shengfeng Institute in the City of Crime, but apparently, the tuition fee to attend the school was extravagant, to say the least. He did everything he could think of in order to raise money for his tuition.

Nearby, the princess curled her lips. "Shengfeng Institute only accepts young ranked experts. You're already how old, and you still want to go? Even if you go, they won't want you."

Guan Hao angrily said, "Who says I'm old? I'm only twenty nine years old! As long as you're under thirty, you're allowed to register to participate in the entrance exam for acceptance into Shengfeng Institute."

"Heavens, you're twenty nine years old?! Why did I think you were a thirty nine year old uncle!"

Guan Hao turned incomparably forlorn. He fished out a razor and quickly shaved his face clean from the beard and moustache that concealed his face. His appearance was indeed similar to that of a youth.

After learning this detail of Guan Hao, the Little Princess no longer cursed him for being a greedy miser. She began to genially call him Hao-zi.

This made Guan Hao even more depressed.

"Please, little lady, if you don't want to address me as dage, then call me Guan Hao. You don't have to call me a rat!"

"Hehe, it's you who thinks that way. That meaning was never my intention, but since you're the one who brought it up, I won't be impolite. From now on, I'll call you a rat."

Everyone laughed out loud. Guan Hao was so angered, he wanted to vomit blood.

Five days later, they arrived at a valley etched between the mountains. It was currently close to noon. The towering trees at either side of the road

shaded them from the blistering sunshine, so no one felt that it was too unbearably sizzling hot.

At the moment, everyone was cooking lunch in their fire pits that they had dug. Suddenly, a fishy-smelling wind blew forth from the forest, and the earth began to lightly quake. Flocks of wild animals appeared running out of the forest, all heading in the same direction. Some of the bigger animals included feral elephants, lions, and tigers, while some of the smaller animals included foxes and snow rabbits. Fortunately, none of the animals attacked anyone.

The chief of the mercenary corps gave a loud, disproving call: "Not good!" He urgently gathered everyone to prepare for battle.

"Brothers, raise your weapons. We've come across trouble. A formidable magical beast should be appearing in front of us soon."

Guan Hao quietly explained to Chen Nan, "According to the current situation, a second ranked magical beast probably succeeded in advancing to the third rank, and the powerful aura willed all the nearby creatures to charge forward and worship it."

Chen Nan was perplexed. "Something like this actually happened?"

Guan Hao nodded. "Yep. Normally, this road is very safe; very few travellers encounter this kind of situation. I didn't expect us to have such bad luck. A powerful magical beast that just advanced to the next rank is bound to challenge enemies in order to consolidate its power. When that happens, an unavoidable battle will break out."

The Little Princess looked excited the instant she heard this. She almost clapped her hands and cheered.

Chen Nan flicked her forehead. "Little demon, you just want to watch the world burn. If a magical beast really comes seeking blood, everyone will be too busy looking after themselves; let's see what you'll do then."

"Hmph, you dare let a hair of mine be harmed? My jiejie wouldn't forgive you. When that happens, you'll die brutally."

Chen Nan was spurred to laughter by these words. "Haha, little demon, you're truly naïve. You still dare threaten me at this point in time? If I were afraid of your jiejie, would I have captured and brought you here? En, I know you. Little girl, you're full of crafty tricks. Don't pretend to be ignorant of the affairs of the world in my presence—stop trying to pull tricks on me."

Just then, a roar suddenly thundered from the distance, shaking the sky: "Hou~!"

The horses that were tasked with pulling the carriages began to incessantly neigh. They restlessly began to struggle against the reins.

The travelling merchants were in a state of panic. Not only were they scared of some powerful magical beast that had yet to show itself, but they were also worrying over the horses being too startled to follow the road properly. They feared the horses would abandon the road, taking the merchandise with them.

After the chief of the mercenary corps noticed the panicked horses, he shouted, "Hurry! Knock all the horses unconscious."

The mercenaries began to move in succession. With either clubs or palms, they firmly smacked the heads of the horses. The twenty or so horses immediately collapsed onto the ground.

The chief was mounted on top of his Land Dragon. He yelled, "Prepare to fight!" With that, he took the lead and rushed forward. With their weapons at hand, the mercenaries followed him to battle. The deputy chief used a hovering spell to fly into the sky. He positioned himself at the rear of the company.

Chen Nan and the princess followed them.

Up ahead of the road was an expansive, open clearing without any tall trees. Only a few lowly shrubs grew there. In the clearing was a massive congregation of feral animals prostrating all over the ground. The scene was quite spectacular.

Among the creatures prostrating up ahead was a giant beast covered with bright fur as white as snow. It resembled a tiger, but it was many times fiercer and stronger. It was three zhang long. It quickly rushed towards the chief's Land Dragon. This giant magical beast gave everyone an intense uneasy feeling, because it really was too large.

The spectacle before them seemed quite like human society—lowly subjects bowing in respect to their grand monarch. It was truly incredible.

Someone cried out, "A White Tiger! But it's way too big. Has it transformed into a spirit?"

"Even if it were a White Tiger, it'd still have stripes. This was never a tiger to begin with."

"Then, what is this monster?"

...

Everyone commented on the scene before them.

The Little Princess sighed, "How powerful and pretty. It's really too cute!"

Everyone was speechless.

Guan Hao explained, "In these boundless mountains, monsters appear with no end in sight. This Tiger King ought to have come from a White Tiger and a Magical Tiger's interbreeding."

The chief nodded in agreement. "The greater variation that these magical beasts have, the more terrifying they become; their power has the capacity for growth. It has already successfully advanced from the second rank to the third rank. This is the time when it wants to consolidate its power. It just happened to have encountered us. This upcoming fierce battle is nearly impossible to avoid."

The Tiger King deserved to be called the monarch of all the creatures in its vicinity. It didn't care about the humans in its presence at all. It simply gazed at them icily.

The deputy chief descended from the sky. "The magical elements around the Tiger King are fluctuating intensely; its magical attack must be utterly dreadful. Everyone needs to be careful." He noticed everyone's nervousness and added, "If we can kill it, the magicite core that it possesses will be incredibly valuable."

With a barely discernibly voice, the chief sighed, "That'll be hard. This is a magical beast of the third rank. Although we have three practitioners of the first rank on our side, we can't just simply add up all our ranks to make up for the disparity of strength between us and that magical beast. Even if all we mercenaries attacked together, this bout can still go either way."

The deputy chief suddenly cried out, "Not good! It has already prepared its attack. I can already sense the magical elements that it has accumulated."

The mercenaries were in an uproar. They had to deal with a powerful Tiger King of the third rank. It was a terrifying magical beast that was a whole two ranks higher than their chief's Land Dragon.

The chief ordered, "Everyone, don't be frantic. Hurry and scatter! Don't converge together!"

These mercenaries have been experiencing life or death trials for a long time already. They rapidly settled down and quickly dispersed towards

advantageous terrain.

Although the deputy chief was already over fifty years old, his reaction time was still nimble. He led the attacks on the magical beast. A glistening blade of wind shot towards the Tiger King with a hiss, aiming for its throat.

The Tiger King gave an enormous roar, as if it was condemning everyone for daring to take the initiative and attack first. It simply lowered its head, dodging the blade of wind with tremendous magical energy. It raised its head highly, looking at them with disdain.

Everyone rubbed their eyes in disbelief. Finally, they confirmed that the Tiger King had indeed shown them a look of disdain.

"This tiger has become a spirit. It can actually express human emotions."

...

Everyone grew apprehensive.

The Little Princess excitedly said, "It's really too cute."

Chen Nan grabbed her by the collar and retreated from the dangerous battlefield.

"Degenerate, let me go! Hurry and let me go!"

The Tiger King gave another great roar. The creatures lying on the ground began to shiver. Trembling in fear, they all stood up simultaneously. They parted from one another in order to create a path for the Tiger King.

Chen Nan was amazed at this scene. He couldn't help but say, "How strange... They really act like humans."

At the moment, the Tiger King was squaring off against the chief, the deputy chief, and Guan Hao. All the other mercenaries dispersed into the surroundings. They formed an entrapment with it in the center. Afraid of the Tiger King's might, the creatures shivered nearby, afraid to go over."

"Hou~!" With a howl, the Tiger King opened its mouth and breathed out lightning. A streak of lightning shot towards the magus with a 'bilipala'.

The magus promptly uttered a spell. The land in front of him began to bulge. A shield of earth appeared before him. At the same time, a shield of water materialized in front of him.

The lightning tore through the shield of earth. In a flash, it crumbled into a pile of earth and rocks. Then, it struck the shield of water. With a 'bilipala' and a flash of sparks, the shield of water also evaporated into a watery mist.

The magus hastily tumbled to the side, but the streak of lightning still managed to come into contact with his body. With a wretched shriek, every hair on his head stood erect as his entire body was thoroughly

burnt black by the lightning arc.

If not for the shields of earth and water resisting most of the streak of lightning, the magus's life would have been in grave danger. After a very long time, he crawled up off the ground, quivering.

At the same time, all the members of the hired mercenary company took action. Arrows shot out of their crossbows, 'sousou'. A rain of arrows, like a swarm of flying locusts, was launched at the Tiger King.

Although the Tiger King's body was large, it remained incomparably agile in its movements. With a few leaps, it jumped out of everyone's encirclement. Afterwards, it swept its gigantic tail horizontally towards the mercenaries in order to inflict utter destruction.

Five mercenaries were whipped by the gigantic tail which seemed like a mace. Their bones and muscles immediately snapped into smithereens as they died violently upon impact. Everyone else's courage was shattered and they quickly fled further away from the battlefield.

The chief rushed to urge his Land Dragon to charge forward. Guan Hao followed closely behind him.

In the sunshine, the Tiger King's fur irradiated a sparkling light. Its robust body, covered in white fur, seemed particularly durable. It aggressively confronted the two men and one dragon that were flying towards it. An ominous glint twinkled in its eyes as it seemed to posture itself for a lunge.

In the blink of an eye, the chief steered his Land Dragon towards it. He carried a Dragon Slaughtering Lance and thrust it towards the throat of the Tiger King. Simultaneously, Guan Hao also arrived at the magical beast. He brandished his broadsword and slashed at the Tiger King's flank.

With a howl, the Tiger King soared into the air, dodging those two attacks. It pounced towards the chief who was atop of his Land Dragon.

Actually, the Land Dragon was larger than the Tiger King, but in the face of such a formidable foe, the dragon still cowered.

The chief saw that there was already insufficient time to dodge. He promptly leapt off, running away.

The giant, three zhang long tiger fell on top of the five zhang long Land Dragon. It opened its giant mouth and bit into the dragon's neck. The Land Dragon struggled to break away, but it wasn't able to escape from the tiger's jaws. Its neck was being chomped by the Tiger King. Blood wildly spurted out.

The chief was so enraged at this scene, his eyes were bloodshot. With a war cry, he charged up. The sharp spearhead of the Dragon Slaughtering Lance ruthlessly plunged into the tiger's abdomen. A stream of blood spurted out. Guan Hao also brandished his broadsword and charged up, ferociously chopping down at the tiger's back. The watery blood of the Tiger King flowed down its brightly white fur.

The Tiger King endured the pain and released the Land Dragon from his maw.

Upon receiving some time to breathe, the Land Dragon then flipped over. After undergoing the most agonizing suffering, it temporarily forgot about its fear towards the Tiger King that it so deeply loathed. It fiercely slammed into the Tiger King.

"Peng!"

The Tiger King was slammed by the Land Dragon and was sent tumbling across the ground. All the surrounding mercenaries simultaneously surged forward. With their blades, spears, clubs, and cudgels, they all began to beat its body. In the blink of an eye, its body was already drenched in blood.

"Hou~!" With a great roar, the Tiger King shook everyone away and stood up. It opened its mouth and breathed out fire. Roasted by the blazing flames, the mercenaries screamed tragically and quickly drew back. However, they were still six people who were pursued by the Tiger King and forcibly eviscerated to shreds. Fresh blood dyed the road red. Everyone else was deeply frightened.

Everyone was currently imprisoned within a zone of danger. The deputy chief had finally recovered. He uttered a long spell. Magical elements began to wildly accumulate around his body. Afterwards, he lightly waved the magic wand in his hand. Tiny snowflakes suddenly floated into existence in the world. Even with the blazing summertime heat, everyone turned frigid.

Bountiful amounts of magical elements coalesced in front of the Tiger King as it bared its fangs and brandished its claws. A dense layer of ice

began to appear on its body. The ice grew thicker and thicker, until it thoroughly froze it inside.

Surviving through this crisis, everyone cheered. The Tiger King had been frozen into a giant block of ice.

However, before everyone's cheers stopped, the sound of the ice shattering rang through the air.

Crack after crack appeared on top of the block of ice and began tearing their way down. With a final bang, the entire block of ice completely shattered. The Tiger King once again appeared in front of everyone, but it was clearly not as energetic or tenacious as earlier.

The deputy chief, the chief, and Guan Hao seized this opportunity to launch their attacks. After the deputy chief read aloud a spell, a spear of ice materialized in front of him. Afterwards, it shot towards the Tiger King as fast as lightning. It accurately pierced into its breast. The chief and Guan Hao also individually brandished their weapons—a Dragon Slaughtering Lance and a broadsword—and stabbed into its abdomen. After that, they quickly vaulted on top of the tiger's back and began relentlessly beating its giant tiger head.

The Tiger King's body began to sway. Watery blood turbulently surged out of its body. At the moment, it was drenched in its own blood. Its previously bright snow white fur was now completely dyed a bloody red.

The chief's Land Dragon was no longer afraid of the Tiger King. It crazily charged towards it. Its gigantic draconic body slammed the tiger, launching it soaring through the air.

The chief and Guan Hao floated off of the tiger to the side. When the Land Dragon bared itself to slam into it again, the swaying Tiger King suddenly stood up and roared. Its roar shook the sky and intimidated the Land Dragon into forcibly stopping in its tracks.

A strange scene began to unfold. A pair of flawlessly white wings suddenly sprouted from the Tiger King's flank. It sharply contrasted with its body that was now drenched in blood. A single horn, as immaculate as impeccable jade, suddenly sprouted out of its forehead. It was about half a chi long.

This bewildering change rendered everyone present dumbfounded.

Chen Nan was inwardly apprehensive. He knew that this was the Tiger King's genuine battle form. If it had revealed its true power a step earlier, there was no way anyone could have injured it.

An expression of delight appeared on the Little Princess's face. "This Tiger King is really too powerful and pretty. It'd be great if it served as my mount!"

The chief loudly shouted, "Everyone, don't be scared! It has transformed too late. It's already injured; it can't support itself much longer. Let's attack it together." With that said, he led the charge forward. Everyone followed him, but the Land Dragon was cowering. It didn't dare advance.

The Tiger King soared into the air. In an instant, it flew incredibly high into the sky. It constantly snarled. Lightning struck down from the sky. Following that was a tremendously wide expanse of raging flames that

swept towards the ground.

Lightning and fire madly danced in the air. Anguished cries erupted from the ground. In the blink of an eye, ten or so people were struck by the lightning and fell into the fire. A vile smell of burnt flesh diffused through the air.

Because of the shelter provided by the trees, the travelling merchants far away from the battle were unable to adequate gauge how devastating the battle had become, but they could see the soaring flames and dancing lightning. They could also see that there was a giant, snarling magical beast in the sky. They were scared senseless, trembling in horror.

The giant tiger had suffered injuries already. After its crazy attack, it grew even weaker, but when its attack finished, over ten people on the ground could be seen to have had forfeited their lives.

Guan Hao collected a pike off the ground. With all his strength, he launched it up into the air. With a 'pu', it pierced into its right wing. It swayed in the sky, nearly losing its balance and falling to the ground.

The Tiger King exploded in fury again. It began desperately accumulating the nearby magical elements. A forceful wave of energy pushed down from the sky.

The deputy chief cried out, "Not good! The magical power is too intense this time. The Tiger King is risking its life for this attack. Everyone, hurry and run, or else we'll just end up perishing along with it."

Chen Nan originally didn't want to meddle too much in these affairs, but seeing that the mercenary company was already no longer able to put up a resistance, he was forced into action. Seeing him walk forward, the Little Princess shouted, "Degenerate, before you walk off to your death, release the curse you placed on me."

"Shut your inauspicious little crow's beak." He flicked the princess's forehead.

The princess painfully cried out, "Damn degenerate, I curse you to be unable to return once you go."

"Then wait for the wonderful feeling of the God of Imprisonment's Finger to flare up in your body."

Chen Nan quickly arrived beside the deputy chief. "Do you have any way to send me up to the Tiger King's back?"

The deputy chief was momentarily stunned before he said, "You... Why have you come here? Hurry and leave. If you stay, I cannot guarantee your safety."

Chen Nan raised his hand and produced some golden sword qi. "As long as you can send me up there, I can eliminate it."

The deputy chief immediately sobered up. The youth before him was actually an expert, but he hesitated. "Can you do it by yourself?"

"Definitely. Don't hesitate, or else if we wait too long and it finishes

gathering enough magical energy, even more people will die."

The deputy chief didn't hesitate any longer. "Alright, thank you."

He incanted a spell. An inexhaustible amount of wind elements immediately congregated around Chen Nan. With a light wave of the magic wand, Chen Nan was engulfed in a fierce wind and was sent soaring up into the sky straight towards the Tiger King.

In the sky, the Tiger King was still busily gathering magical elements. When it noticed the unexpected guest quickly flying towards it from the ground, Chen Nan had already arrived only three zhang away from it thanks to the speed infusion from the deputy chief's spell.

It wanted to open its mouth to breathe fire, but Chen Nan was one step quicker. He launched a pike that he had prepared. The pike released a faint golden glow. In a flash, it pierced into the Tiger King's neck.

The Tiger King released a long, anguished howl. It flipped over in the sky, blood madly pouring out. A rain of blood fell from the sky.

The deputy chief used all his remaining magical energy to send Chen Nan passed the last stretch to the Tiger King's back.

The Tiger King had already lost its balance in the air. It constantly swayed, unable to regain its footing. Chen Nan's hand shot out and grabbed its tail, stabilizing its body.

Gradually, the Tiger King was able to regain its balance, but its injuries

were already threatening its life. It was no longer intending to consolidate its power for all the creatures to see. It quickly prepared to fly away into the distance.

Chen Nan was very uneasy. He swiftly climbed onto the tiger's neck. After settling on its back, he brandished his fists to heavily pound its gigantic head.

"Peng!", "Peng!", "Peng!"...

The Tiger King's body began to sway again. It quickly dropped towards the ground.

Chen Nan didn't dare use too much strength in his strikes. The Tiger King was already incredibly weak. If he made use of his sword qi irrationally, he could easily kill it, but at the moment, he was also at risk of crashing into the ground and becoming utterly crushed. The wind thundered against his ears as they dove down. A feeling of nervousness swelled in his heart.

Right when they arrived less than ten zhang away from the ground, the Tiger King was finally able to regain its balance and put a stop to the downward momentum of their free-fall. At the moment, streams of blood flowed down between its nose and ears. Its flesh and muscles slightly convulsed. Critical injury after injury had left it incomparably weak.

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1 A pun. 耗子/haozi/rat sounds similar to 浩仔/Hao-zi, a nickname Yu'er gave him that pokes fun at how young, like a boy, he apparently is.

Chapter 4: Xiao Yu 第四章 小玉

When the Tiger King stabilized itself again, Chen Nan brandished his fists and pounded its head some more. With a roar that shook the sky, the Tiger King suddenly grew insane. After successfully stopping its downward descent, it crazily rolled and churned around in the air. It was trying to fling Chen Nan off of its body.

The travelling merchants in the distance were watching the intense struggle in the skies and were beyond terrified. They were shivering in fear.

All the mercenaries on the ground were petrified. Every one of them held their breaths. They nervously looked up into the sky, breaking out into cold sweats for the sake of Chen Nan.

At the moment, the Little Princess was the only person who still dared to voice a thought. She uttered under her breath, "Force... Use more force. That smelly thief was nearly flung off, so use a bit more force—but only a bit more. Throw him to the ground so he'll be halfway dead; I still need him to neutralize that rotten finger technique."

The mercenaries close to her gave her some strange looks. This incurred a very haughty glance and a cold hump from the princess.

Chen Nan sat on top of the Tiger King's neck. Both of his legs were firmly clasping onto its neck, while both of his hands were tightly

gripping onto its fur. Hearing the wind thunder at his ears, he noticed the ground become closer and closer. Nervousness shot through his heart. He inwardly blamed himself for being too impetuous and enraging the Tiger King.

When they were six, seven zhang away from the ground, the Tiger King abruptly stopped in mid-dive. It unfolded its wings, stopping their plunge into the ground.

Chen Nan released a long breath of air. His body was currently covered in a cold sweat.

The Tiger King had already been seriously injured. With these violently jerky movements, it felt drained of all energy. It wavered as it descended onto the ground.

Chen Nan's wrestle with the Tiger King could be said to be very thrilling. At any point in time, he could have fallen from a high altitude, crashing into the ground and being crumpled. Everyone watching from the ground was terrified.

When the Tiger King shakily arrived three zhang from the ground, Chen Nan's worrying heart finally settled down. He viciously pounded the Tiger King's head several times. Then, he forcefully stomped the tiger's back before leaping off.

The Tiger King gave an unreconciled snarl as it dropped from the sky. With a bang, it slammed into the ground, flattening a large area of shrubbery.

The mercenaries on the ground all joyfully cheered in unison. They all raised their weapons and wildly attacked the Tiger King.

The faraway travelling merchants saw how Chen Nan had defeated the formidable magical beast. They all uniformly exhaled. They relaxed from their tense states. Everyone tiredly sat down on the ground.

A moment ago, the Tiger King had been in the sky displaying its fierce might. Its lightning and flames had devastated the mercenary company. The corps suffered monumental damage—deaths upon deaths, injures upon injures. The fortunate survivors desired vengeance in their hearts and overzealously attacked the tiger. Numerous weapons penetrated into its body at various places. In the blink of an eye, the seriously injured Tiger King was on the verge of death, ready to loose its last breath. Fresh blood dyed the grass red. A bloody mist diffused from its ragged body.

All the creatures saw the Tiger King at the verge of death. They howled and hissed... Everything and everyone were in an upheaval. Finally, they all scattered from the scene every which way. A fishy smell was swept up and the ground trembled.

The Little Princess suddenly ran up to the mercenaries and anxiously shouted, "Stop! Everyone, stop! It'll die soon..."

Her shouting attracted the attention of all the mercenaries. They all whipped their heads to face her. With a scowl, one of the mercenaries said, "Little girl, what the hell are you saying? You actually want us to stop? This bastard took over twenty of my allies' lives. They were all my brothers who I lived with day in and day out!"

Chen Nan swiftly walked over to them and said, "This girl's brain is kind of messed up, so she's typically a little muddleheaded. Don't worry about her. You guys can continue." With that said, he dragged her away.

The princess struggled to break free from his grasp and shouted, "You bastard, you're the one that's messed up! Let go of me... Don't kill the Tiger King! I can compensate you all for the damage."

One of the mercenaries furiously said, "Compensate us? How will you compensate us for the lives that my brothers have lost?"

"No one can return from death, but I can compensate the families of the casualties..."

The mercenaries attacked the Tiger King in frenzy. No matter how much the princess cried at them to stop, they kept beating it. Only when the Tiger King was rendered completely motionless did everyone finally calm down.

The flesh of the Tiger King was now mutilated beyond recognition. Fresh blood turbulently bubbled out of its hideous, ghastly wounds. There were even a few places on its body where its thick, white bones were exposed.

The Little Princess was angry and worried, but she couldn't do anything about it.

Chen Nan said, "Little witch, that time, you used every possible evil means to torment me. Now, you actually sympathize for some vicious

beast? Little demon, you simply don't make any sense."

The princess was seething with anger. "Who cares about you? The Tiger King is much better than you. You're the most shameless, contemptible bastard in the world. One day, I'll cut you to pieces!"

Right then, someone raised their knife in order to cut open the Tiger King's chest and stomach to retrieve its magicite core. When the princess noticed this, she worriedly shouted, "You guys can't do that! The Tiger King wasn't beaten by you, so why are you guys taking its magicite core?"

The chief walked over to them and asked, "How should we address this brother?"

Chen Nan answered, "I am surnamed Chen."

"I never thought Chen-xiongdi's skill was this excellent. You truly possess the strength to defeat a savage Tiger King and have spared many of my brothers from its nefarious plot. Its magicite core respectfully belongs to you."

The deputy chief added, "Of course the magicite core should be given to Chen-xiongdi. Take a break, everyone. Bury our brothers who have fallen in combat."

The mercenary corps suffered monumental losses this time. Twelve members were seriously injured, and twenty three were brutally killed.

After tidying up the scene, everyone from the mercenary corps

expressed their gratitude towards Chen Nan. Then, they went over to the travelling merchants. Only Chen Nan, the Little Princess, and Guan Hao remained on the former battlefield.

Guan Hao awkwardly laughed. "I didn't expect Chen-xiongdi to be concealing his power. Your ability is much more remarkable than this bodyguard's, heihei..."

Chen Nan said, "Well then are you going to refund me my one hundred gold coins?"

"Ah, the weather isn't too bad today, huh? A light breeze and some sunshine. Not a cloud in sight. A vast blue sky, as far as the eyes can see, completely spotless."

The princess shouted, "Damn rat, what the hell are you talking about?"

"Uh, I... Heihei. I just wanted to discuss something with Chen-xiongdi. Could you perhaps give me some parts of the tiger, such as its fur, peni  
—"

The princess who was standing nearby lunged at him. She kicked and scratched at him.

"You miser, damn perverted rat... Fuck off! You don't get anything!"

Guan Hao hastily escaped without a trace.

The princess turned to Chen Nan and said, "Can you give me some time alone with the Tiger King?"

As Chen Nan left, he muttered, "She's truly a relative of demons. She actually holds a deep affection for that vicious beast."

When she saw Chen Nan disappear into the woods, the princess's heart settled down. She murmured to herself, "This doesn't make any sense. My teacher, that smelly old man, once said that magical beasts that are capable of growth have very tenacious vitality. They won't easily die, so why was this guy so easily finished off?"

She circled the Tiger King and gently sighed, "It seems like it truly has died." Right when she turned away to leave, she suddenly heard a muffled gasp. The Little Princess jumped in fright. She quickly whipped her head around to see what was happening.

She saw the Tiger King bat an eyelid before unexpectedly completely opening its eyes. Soon after, its tiger body began to tremble.

"Ah, it's alive! It didn't really die." But at the same time, she was somewhat frightened. She had just personally witnessed the terrifying might of the Tiger King. Right now, her heart was perturbed.

The princess's voice quivered as she said, "L-little tiger, y-you don't have scared. I won't harm you."

"Did she tell it not to be scared, or is she telling herself not to be scared? Haha... It's actually pretty laughable." Chen Nan had originally

left, but recalling how beasts came and went unpredictably in these mountains, he didn't feel at ease with the princess on her own, so he had returned. He had returned right on time to hear those words escape from the princess's mouth. He couldn't help but grin.

"How can this princess be afraid of some little tiger? You degenerate, why did you suddenly come back?" When she saw Chen Nan's sudden reappearance, she no longer felt scared.

"Oh, please. This is a super-giant creature; you don't have to title it with 'little', okay? No matter how I look at it, you don't even fill one of the gaps between its teeth."

"Hmph. Can you leave?"

Chen Nan circled the Tiger King and said, "How unexpected. This guy is really quite stubborn. It's already been beaten to this state, yet it still refuses to depart from the world."

The princess was somewhat anxious. She uneasily asked, "Damn degenerate, do you want to take action against it again?"

"Yep. If this vicious beast is left alive to roam the world, I don't know how many people will be killed."

The princess stepped between the tiger and Chen Nan. "No. I won't let you touch it."

The Tiger King suddenly stood up waveringly. The place where it had

been lying down had a half a chi deep puddle of its blood. An ominous glint flickered in its eyes as it gazed at Chen Nan, but it was mostly afraid. Its gaze towards the princess was much gentler.

"Wow, it doesn't hold any hostility towards me. Little tiger, you won't bite me, right?"

When the Tiger King heard her words, it unexpectedly nodded its head like a human.

The Little Princess immediately cheered, "Heavens! It can actually understand what I say! This is too hard to believe."

Seeing the Tiger King stand up, Chen Nan unsheathed his long knife. A glistening light flickered from the blade—cold, murderous intent.

When the princess noticed his movements, she hurriedly said, "Don't touch it."

Chen Nan responded, "What if it hurts someone?"

The princess replied, "It won't. It definitely won't hurt anyone."

"You aren't it. Can you guarantee anything?"

"You... Hmph! It listens to what I say." The princess turned to the Tiger King and said, "Listen to my words: don't hurt anyone, or else this smelly guy will kill you."

The Tiger King looked at the Little Princess, and then looked at Chen Nan. It ultimately nodded its head.

This made the princess jubilant. She praised, "What an intelligent creature! It's much better than those dragons of those smelly dragon riders. Little tiger, from now on, you must follow me. I promise I'll treat you well."

Chen Nan scoffed. "Save your breath. You want this big guy to obediently follow you? You're dreaming. Besides, its injuries are incredibly grave. Travelling is also a problem. Those mercenaries absolutely won't tolerate it."

"I don't care. I definitely won't let anyone hurt it." The princess didn't pay any more attention to him. She was somewhat vexed. "Little tiger, you've been seriously hurt. You can't walk, and your body is so big. How can we take it with us?"

What happened next stunned Chen Nan and the princess. The Tiger King's pair of wings and solitary horn suddenly vanished without a trace. Its gigantic tiger body began to quickly miniaturize. The tiger's body went from three zhang long down to not even one zhang. The weapons that were pierced into its body also fell off. Its injuries quickly healed. In just a moment, it seemed good as new.

The Tiger King shook its body. The blood that layered its body flung off onto the ground. Clean, its bright white fur was on full display.

Surprised, Chen Nan quipped, "So it's actually a Tiger Demon. It already

knows some transformation techniques."

The princess was also amazed. She shouted, "This is just unimaginable. It actually knows some transformation techniques!"

Chen Nan mused over this. Although he had never seen a monster, he had heard his father talk about them. Many of the spiritual beasts from the east could gather the world's original vital qi and absorb the sun and moon's quintessence. Along with the accumulation of time, these spiritual beasts would gradually become spirits. They would slowly create their own methods of cultivation. Many spiritual beasts would become incomparably formidable. From the point of view of the common people, these spiritual beasts had become demonic beasts. The even stronger ones became known as monsters.

Demonic beasts and monsters all possessed unordinary power. Demonic beasts' bodily forms were massive. Additionally, they could breathe out a cloudy mist. Monsters were clearly much stronger. The monsters of legends could even transform and take the form of humans. They could even understand magic. Even extraordinary people, peak experts, may not necessarily reach their level of strength.

That year, his father Chen Zhan had encountered a powerful monster. After a great battle, he had beaten the monster back into its original form. After the battle, Chen Zhan had carefully analyzed what had happened and gradually understood some of the mystery pertaining to demonic beasts and monsters.

Through cultivation, demonic beasts could slowly transform their physical bodies. They crafted their bodies to be able to better contain the spiritual qi of the world. Therefore, demonic beasts were all massive—

they contained in their gigantic bodies tremendously powerful energy. If a demonic beast was ever seriously injured, or perhaps it was pushed to the brink of death, the power within its body would slowly disperse and it would regain its original form, transforming back to its size as an ordinary beast.

Monsters were much stronger than demonic beasts. They didn't desire any physical changes. Instead, they desired fundamental changes. Because of this, monsters wanted to transform into the form of humans. They took great effort in transforming their physical bodies into this form for the sake of better cultivation. According to legends, the form of humans and a few other forms of mythical beasts were most well-adapted for cultivation. This was the reason why monsters pursued the ability to transform into either humans or mythical beasts.

Chen Nan gazed at the Tiger King before him with an amazed expression. He had previously thought that this was just a magical beast. He didn't expect it to actually comprehend cultivation methods of demonic beasts.

"How remarkable! It's worthy of having the blood of the eastern White Tiger and the western Magical Tiger. It understands the cultivation methods of demonic beasts and has the innate ability to use magic like magical beasts. Perhaps this guy has been cultivating for thousands of years. Killing it would really be a bit of a waste."

The princess shouted, "You absolutely can't kill it. Since this little tiger is so cute and pretty and mystical, I will definitely have it stay by my side. But if it could become smaller, that'd be good."

When the Tiger King heard these words from the princess, its body

trembled. Its body actually began to turn smaller.

"This is great!" The princess was thrilled.

The Tiger King transformed from one zhang in length to merely one chi. It appeared to be an adorable little porcelain kitten."

The Little Princess delightedly cried out, "Aiyah! It became a little tiger in reality! Hurry and come over." She beckoned towards the Tiger King.

The kitten didn't forgo its Tiger King mannerisms as it twisted its body walking towards her. A pair of immaculately white wings sprouted from its flank. A jade horn protruded out of its forehead. Then, it began flapping its wings and flew into the princess's bosom.

Watching, Chen Nan was left wide-eyed and slack-jawed. He mumbled, "How is this possible? When a demonic beast is seriously injured and loses its power, it's supposed to return to its original form. How can it still transform even smaller? This tiger sure is strange!"

The Little Princess embraced the snow white Tiger King. "Hehe," she giggled.

The Tiger King absorbed its pair of wings and single horn back into its body. With this final transformation, it truly resembled a gentle kitten. Cozy, it closed its eyes as it snuggled into the princess's arms.

Chen Nan sighed, "Lustful tiger, what are you actually looking for!"

The princess heatedly said, "Degenerate, you're still talking nonsense? This little tiger wouldn't be filthy like you."

The Tiger King opened its eyes and looked at Chen Nan. At first, it still held somewhat of a fearful look, but it seemed to detect that the princess was able to protect it from him. It suddenly opened its mouth and shot out a fine streak of lightning.

This was much too abrupt. With a light 'bipa', the electricity struck the crown of Chen Nan's head, scorching his face pitch-black. Every strand of his hair stood erect.

"Damn tiger! Lustful tiger, I'll kill you! Fuck, how dare you attack someone more powerful than yourself?"

The princess shoved him back. "You deserved it. It was you who instigated it. Little tiger was only acting in self-defence."

"..."

He spent a great deal of time in order to pat down his erect hair. Afterwards, he shot a fierce glance at the Tiger King and said, "Don't think that you're safe because you transformed into a cat. With just one shout, I can have those mercenaries immediately butcher you to pieces."

The princess said, "You dare? This little tiger will be following me from now on, so you can't let anyone hurt it. En, I should think of a name for it. What should it be called? Considering its entire body is a bright snowy

white, like jade, I shall call you Xiao Yu."

The Tiger King joyfully rubbed himself against the princess's protruding chest. Chen Nan's nose began to bleed profusely upon seeing this. He began envying that little guy.

"Hehe," giggled the princess, "It really likes that name! Xiao Yu, from now on, I'll be your master. Henceforth you must listen to what I say. No matter what, you cannot be repulsive like that bastard over there."

The princess patted Xiao Yu's furry tiger head. After that, he vigorously ran past Chen Nan. Angry, Chen Nan truly wanted to grab him and squish him to death.

Afterwards, the princess began pestering Chen Nan, asking him to cooperate to save the Tiger King Xiao Yu. Faced with her incessant pestering, he finally nodded in agreement.

Throughout the journey, it could be said that the Little Princess was incomparably mischievous. It seemed like she had no idea that she was a captive. She would often do or say something shocking. Sometimes, Chen Nan truly wanted to punish her, but the instant he recalled that one hundred and seventy year old monster from the imperial family of Chu, he'd abandon those kinds of thoughts.

That old man was the most tyrannical practitioner that he had encountered so far. If he harmed the Little Princess, God knows what that old monster would do to repay him. Most importantly, he felt that that old man had been following them the entire journey, apparently hidden within the shadows. This was the reason why he hadn't dared to do

anything too excessive to the princess up to this point.

Although the princess irritated and annoyed Chen Nan the entire journey, after some careful consideration, he realized that everything appeared to be calculated by the little girl. He sensed that this little girl's thinking was really not shallow. After careful examination, it wasn't hard to realize that she had purposely feigned naïvety and ignorance of the world throughout the journey. This reckless, headstrong appearance caused others to relax their guards against her.

As a matter of fact, the little demon was absolutely not a simple-minded person. She had proven this when they were at the western borders of Chu. In fact, it was proven that she was very astute. Her innate chicanery was without a doubt the reason why she had been acting this way.

There was another reason why the Little Princess was not concerned about her current unfavourable position. She had analyzed the situation before her a long time ago. She knew that for now, Chen Nan wouldn't dare act impulsively, nor did he dare completely destroy his so far passive relationship with the power that backed her, directly fighting against them. After all, he wasn't able to fight a nation with just one man. For now, he required her to serve as his 'protective talisman'.

At the moment, the princess was currently whispering something to the Tiger King Xiao Yu. She carefully gave him instructions.

"Xiao Yu, go up the road ahead of us. For now, you must not let those mercenaries discover you, understand?" With those orders, she released Xiao Yu onto the ground. Her eyes followed him as he vanished into the depths of the forest.

Afterwards, the Little Princess assumed an exasperated and irritated look. She loudly shouted, "Not good! The Tiger King resurrected!"

Every member of the mercenary company was stunned. Mounted atop his injured Land Dragon, the chief was the first one to rush over to the scene. The deputy chief used his Wind Soaring Technique to quickly fly over. All the other members closely followed behind him.

When everyone arrived, there was already no trace left of the Tiger King.

The chief impatiently called out, "Chen-xiongdi, what happened?"

Chen Nan said, "Right before I cut open its flank, the Tiger King leapt up. It unfolded its wings and flew deep into those mountains." He pointed his finger to some mountain range not too far away from the valley they were in.

When everyone heard this, they hung their heads, crestfallen. No one expected the Tiger King to have escaped death. The princess was the only one who was inwardly happy.

The crisis involving the Tiger King passed like this. After the horses were roused back awake and regained their bearings, everyone continued down the road. As they travelled, everyone was taciturn and seldom spoke. The face of every member of the mercenary company looked sorrowful. The atmosphere was somewhat depressed.

After travelling over ten li, the princess couldn't help but quietly mumble, "I hope Xiao Yu didn't lose his way."

Chen Nan sneered. "Little demon, you're usually as sly as a fox. Today, you were actually tricked by a lustful tiger and left bewildered. How hilarious!"

Just when he finished saying that, the Tiger King Xiao Yu shot out of the forest with a 'sou'.

Surprised, the princess exclaimed, "A cute kitten!" She ran over and embraced Xiao Yu into her bosom.

Everyone was very amazed. Not only because the princess had embraced a 'mountain cat' against her chest, but also because this 'mountain cat' looked awfully similar to that astonishing Tiger King from before. If there wasn't such a great difference in size between the two, everyone would have immediately unsheathed their weapons and rushed forward to slaughter it.

Chen Nan sighed, "This lustful tiger is really lecherous. He's surprisingly so reluctant to part with you. How shameless."

The princess quietly cursed, "You're this world's most shameless bastard!"

Xiao Yu nodded repeatedly in her bosom.

When Chen Nan saw this, his anger flared. He cursed, "Fuck! Lustful

tiger, you can actually understand whatever we say? You sycophant! One day, I'll rip off your tiger fur to serve as my shoes."

The Tiger King Xiao Yu regularly left at night to forage. At first, the princess had become anxious when she had found him missing, but she slowly understood his natural instincts and paid him no mind.

Nothing else unexpected happened during the rest of the trip. The party soon arrived at the City of Crime.

## Volume 3 Chapter 5: Flying Witch

Everyone persevered through the boundless mountains. Although they passed through several taverns and inns that specialized in replenishing the supplies of travellers, they did not have the luxury to stop for too long. They ate and slept in the face of the elements throughout the journey. Finally, on the fifteenth day of travelling, they arrived at the continent's renowned City of Freedom—otherwise known as the City of Crime.

The City of Crime was situated on top of the largest area of flat land that was available in the boundless mountains. Although it was called a city, it did not have any city walls. There was only a system of rivers that surrounded and weaved through the City of Freedom in the form of a '田'. This system of rivers was a major transportation thoroughfare in the city.

The city had a population of approximately four hundred thousand inhabitants. The population of the City of Freedom was much lower than the population of other major cities, but its prosperity was no less than that of any capital city of any nation. An endless flow of people and carriages streamed through the city. There were many stores, romantic getaways, illicit money dens, casinos... It truly did have everything. The flourishing City of Crime was famous on the continent. It was a dazzling gem among the famous cities of the continent.

Half of the supplies that the City of Crime considered daily expenditure was produced domestically. The other half was continuously transported over from the eastern and western continent. Because its location was so remote, the transportation of supplies was not very convenient. This was the main reason why the population of the City of Freedom could not

grow too excessively.

Perhaps one could regard the City of Crime as its own small state, because this was a land of freedom that was not considered to be a part of any other nation. The city had its own military, although it wasn't too large. The daily affairs of the city were decided in a collaborative effort by its five city lords.

Gazing into the distance, the City of Freedom could be seen to be surrounded by lush green hills. It was wrapped around clear rivers of water, as if it were a utopian land of joy. The landscape was captivating, and the scenery was gorgeous.

No one from the mercenary corps stopped here to take a break. They continued to escort the travelling merchants towards the western continent.

As Guan Hao's eyes followed the lord who had hired the corps enter the City of Crime, he asked Chen Nan, "Chen-xiongdi, why have you come to the City of Crime? Are you like me and plan to register to attend Shenfeng Institute?"

Chen Nan answered, "No, I've come here to seek refuge."

Alarmed, Guan Hao asked, "You have such excellent skill. At the very least, you've reached the level of the second rank. Who can possibly force you to flee so far?"

"It's that little girl's family." Chen Nan pointed at the Little Princess at

the side who was happily playing with the Tiger King Xiao Yu.

Guan Hao was astonished. "So this little girl actually holds great influence, yet you still dare to hit her? You truly are fueled by lust that encompasses the heavens!"

The princess heard this, hugged Xiao Yu, and angrily said, "Damn rat, what garbage are you spouting? Do you just take whatever this guy says as gospel?"

Guan Hao looked at the princess. "If we washed the filth off of your face, you could truly be considered a gorgeous woman. Chen-xiongdi, you have really good taste!"

"Xiao Yu, help me teach this bastard a lesson."

With a 'sou', the Tiger King Xiao Yu leapt from the princess' bosom onto Guan Hao's shoulders. Guan Hao chortled, "Little thing, you dare land on the shoulders of my grand se—"

Before he was able to finish his sentence, an earth-shattering howl thundered through his ears: "Hou~!"

Guan Hao's two ears were stunned by that roar. A low buzz echoed through his ears. He had no idea what was going on as he was overpowered onto the ground by some gigantic monster.

When he awakened from his stupor, he found himself being sat on by a large tiger's buttocks. He couldn't help but scream, "Mom, save me~!"

From the side, the Little Princess delicately laughed.

Guan Hao's face was pale with fright. He stammered, "Chen-xiongdi, save me! Little girl, I know my mistakes. Wu... Mom... Hurry and get this guy off me!"

An ominous glint flickered in the Tiger King's eyes. He had previously been beaten by all the mercenaries. Now that one of his great enemies was before him, he opened his mouth rapaciously wide in order to chomp down on his prey.

Just before Chen Nan made his move, the Little Princess urgently obstructed the Tiger King. "Xiao Yu, don't!"

The Tiger King stopped. He unconvincingly looked at the princess.

The princess said, "Although this guy is disgusting, his crime doesn't deserve death. Don't rashly take someone's life or harm them seriously, understand?"

Xiao Yu shifted off of Guan Hao, but he continued to stare down his prey.

Trembling, Guan Hao climbed up off the ground. He unblinkingly stared at the completely snow white, jade-like Tiger King. Finally, he shrieked, "Heavens! This guy is... the Tiger King! It... it actually became a spirit! The small stray cat is actually its incarnate!"

That day, the Tiger King had suffered heavy damage, and his power critically fell. He already dropped from a third ranked magical beast to one of the first rank. His body was now not even one zhang long. He was now not much larger than an ordinary tiger, but his arrogant bearing was the same as before. With one glance, Guan Hao recognized him.

With a 'sou', he ran behind Chen Nan. With a quivering voice, he said, "No wonder... it stared so ferociously at all the mercenaries throughout the journey... So this is why... This guy is just too terrifying; it actually knows transformation techniques."

The princess looked at him with ill intent. "What a blabbermouth. Today, I must properly teach you a lesson."

"Little girl, don't come over here. Chen-xiongdi, quickly drive away that Tiger Demon." On that day, the merciless Tiger King had left too profound of an impression on Guan Hao. Seeing the flickering ominous glint in Xiao Yu's eyes, he grew a bit sheepish.

Chen Nan smiled, motionless. He wanted to see the merits of the Tiger King's cultivation from the past few days and see how much of his power was recovered. Furthermore, he wanted a glimpse of Guan Hao's true ability.

The princess's current smile was exceptionally sinister. Chen Nan seemed to see the little demon from that time at the western border of Chu. At the moment, the Tiger King had already detoured around Chen Nan. He slowly pressed on closer and closer towards Guan Hao. The princess watched from behind him.

Guan Hao's face suddenly turned green. With a quivering voice, he said, "Little girl, there are no grievances or enmity between us. I cautiously and earnestly protected you throughout the journey. How can you treat me like this?"

"Hou~!"

"Mom~!"

With a great howl from the Tiger King Xiao Yu, Guan Hao whipped around and fled in fear.

From the rear, the Little Princess clapped her hands and laughed. "Xiao Yu, don't bite him. Shock him with your lightning or breathe some fire at him, hehe..."

"Kala!"

An arc of lightning erupted out from the Tiger King's maw. It quickly struck Guan Hao who was fleeing up ahead.

His body emitted a wisp of light smoke. His entire body was scorched black. A faint charred smell dispersed from his body.

The powerful electrical current was definitely not enough to knocking Guan Hao down. It merely lightly burned his robust build, nothing more. He didn't even slow down; he continued flying away into the trees.

"Hou~!"

With another tiger's howl, a vast, all-encompassing flame swept towards Guan Hao.

"Help~!" A miserable cry could be heard echoing from the forest.

"Xiao Yu, come back." The Tiger King turned around and ran back to the princess's side.

"Little girl—hu~—you really are a little demon!" Guan Hao was propping himself up against a big, smoky green tree, repeatedly panting for air. At the moment, his clothes were tattered, and his body was burnt a crisp black. Every hair on his head was standing erect. He appeared to be in a disastrous state.

The princess flipped herself onto the Tiger King and said, "Xiao Yu, can you fly? Hurry and transform. We'll go sort out that repulsive guy together."

The Tiger King loosed a roar. A pair of immaculately white wings sprouted from either side of his flank. A jade horn protruded out from his forehead. With that, he rushed forward, carrying the Little Princess into the sky.

In the sky, the princess excitedly shouted and screamed, "This is great! I can fly, now, too! Haha~! When that queer Magic-popo tries to force me into learning magic, I have an excuse now! Xiao Yu, let's go sort out that guy together. Charge!"

Guan Hao's countenance drastically changed. He spun around and burrowed deeper into the forest. At that instant, he came to the same realization Chen Nan once had: this little girl was definitely a relative of the demons of hell.

"Haha! Damn rat, where can you hide? Xiao Yu, breathe fire. Yeah, burn him! Haha!"

"Little witch, I surrender~!"

"Xiao Yu, shock him!"

"Help~!"

"Xiao Yu, chase him!"

"Chen-xiongdi, hurry and help me! I'll refund you your one hundred gold coins..."

"Fire! Lightning!"

"Chen-xiongdi, I'll give you a thousand gold coins! I'll hire you as my bodyguard, so hurry and save me!"

...

The Tiger King's vicious power had left too profound of an impression on Guan Hao that day. His heart harboured an incomparable phobia towards Xiao Yu. He simply failed to notice that the Tiger King's strength was already not as formidable as it previously was. Because of this, Guan Hao continued to only constantly evade his attacks passively.

A ruckus brewed in the forest, including the pleased laughter of the Little Princess and the miserable shrieks of Guan Hao.

Finally, Guan Hao was truly unable to run anymore. He sprawled across the ground in the form of a '大'. His eyes were white, and a froth bubbled out of his mouth.

From the sky, the princess discontentedly shouted, "Boring! I really can't get enough of this! Only, you're already finished after just a few bouts." After that, she turned her sights onto Chen Nan. Another wicked smile formed at her lips.

A jolt of alarm shot through Chen Nan's mind. He knew the Little Princess all too well. He knew that she had formulated another evil plan.

"Little demon, don't cause trouble. Hurry and come down, or else the people from the City of Freedom will notice the trouble you're causing."

"Heihei, damn degenerate, I hate you to death. Today, I must properly teach you a lesson."

Chen Nan replied, "Don't forget that I have cursed you with my God of Imprisonment's Finger. If I'm not happy with you, I can cause you

insufferable pain. In an instant, the symptoms will flare up."

"You... Degenerate, smelly thief, scoundrel, bastard...!" The princess was enraged. If she didn't have to worry about the God of Imprisonment's Finger, she would have long ago rode the Tiger King Xiao Yu back to the capital city of Chu.

"No. No matter what, I must teach you a lesson. Xiao Yu, shock him!"

"Kala!"

A powerful arc of lightning rippled through the air, streaking towards Chen Nan. He rapidly unsheathed his long knife and hurled it into the air. The lightning collided with the knife in midair. An enormous ball of dazzling luminescence exploded out from the collision. Ultimately, the long knife dropped to the ground, and the lightning was dissipated.

The princess was furious. She cried out, "Xiao Yu, burn him!"

The reason why the Tiger King had been met with defeat that day was solely due to Chen Nan's presence. Again faced with his nemesis, he repeatedly howled. He breathed out a vast flame. The monstrous wave of fire engulfed everything below heaven.

Chen Nan didn't try to evade this attack. Instead, he brandished his palms and punched towards the sky. A powerful golden qi blew up a fierce wind, pushing the advancing fire backwards.

"Disgusting. How did this guy actually become so difficult? Xiao Yu,

don't be discouraged. Again!" The princess ordered the Tiger King to endlessly attack Chen Nan. He flipped around up and down in the sky, manoeuvring to make his attack.

In the City of Crime, at Shenfeng Institute, an old man draped in violet clothing and another old man draped in blue clothing were gazing intently into the distant sky. They sighed in surprise.

The old man dressed in violet sighed, "That Tiger King has the outstanding lineage of an eastern White Tiger and a western Magical Tiger!"

The old man dressed in blue sighed, "It's a type of magical beast that is capable of boundless growth. It's truly an ideal mount!"

...

The old man dressed in violet said, "The rumoured God's Hand unexpectedly attracted the interest of so many practitioners. Recently, the City of Crime has been unusually lively."

The old man dressed in blue nodded in agreement. "Right. I didn't think the left hand that snapped off of an ancient god would actually stir up this great of a disturbance. I don't know if the God's Hand is truly gripping onto a shining object. If it does, everyone would be trembling in excitement to see what it is."

The old man dressed in violet said, "How about the two of us and all the other elders discuss having this semester's students investigate this

'search for the God's left hand'?"

The old man dressed in blue laughed. "You sly old fox... However, it really is a good idea."

The old man dressed in violet said, "That Tiger King's master doesn't seem to be too old. She seems to be about the same age as your granddaughter. If your granddaughter mounted her Godly Roc and rushed over, it would truly be a marvelous scene, heihei..."

The old man dressed in blue laughingly scolded, "You old thing, you truly wish to watch the world burn. You actually want those two youngsters to have a battle..."

The old man dressed in violet said, "If only your granddaughter had never seen a strange beast that is comparable to her Godly Roc. With her disposition, she'd definitely go spar with it."

Just then, the cry of a bird sounded from Shenfeng Institute. A golden ray soared into the sky, piercing through the air.

The two elders looked at each other in dismay. The old man in blue said, "You crow, you actually predicted it."

Overhead the eastern portion of the City of Crime, the Little Princess was mounted atop her Tiger King, flying around and about in the sky. She continuously cursed at Chen Nan, as if all the wrongs that she had recently suffered at his hands were being sent right back at him.

"Damn degenerate..."

"Smelly bastard..."

"Terrible scoundrel..."

"Shameless, smelly thief..."

...

As the princess cursed, she commanded her Tiger King to shoot lightning and breathe flames to attack Chen Nan.

Although Chen Nan wasn't afraid of these several attacks, he was still flustered by the assault. At the moment, he very much envied those flying magi. If he could fly, he would've captured the princess long ago.

"No wonder the power of dragon riders and magi can shake the world. If someone has the freedom to roam both the ground and the skies, their fighting strength will increase by many folds. What kind of cultivation must an eastern martial artist attain in order to gain the ability of flight? Would one require cultivating to the unfathomably profound level of father?" He mused over this in his mind as he evaded the lightning and flames.

Suddenly, a bird's cry rang through the air. A golden ray, like lightning, arrived with but a wink.

The princess was startled and quickly put a hold to her cursing. The Tiger King Xiao Yu also had an alert expression on his face. His eyes unblinkingly watched up ahead.

A gigantic golden bird was carrying over a girl dressed in yellow clothes from the distance. In a flash, they arrived before the princess. A fierce wind erupted in the sky.

The princess swayed atop of Xiao Yu's back. Startled, she shrieked, "Ah! Xiao Yu, settle down!"

Actually, the Tiger King never swayed at all. It was only she who was blown into a waver by the squall brought forth from the gigantic bird. However, Xiao Yu was particular to other people's views. He followed her movements and also swayed a bit, helping her stabilize herself.

The princess was indignant. "The smelly bird and smelly girl that just arrived, how audacious are you to have crashed towards us like so?"

The giant golden bird's tail was two zhang long. With its two wings unfolded, it became five zhang wide. The wings flickered gold, as if it were competing with the Tiger King in power and boldness. On top of the bird's back was a masked girl dressed in yellow. Her build was slender, and her curves were delightful.

The masked girl heard her insult and shot back in ridicule, "Little beggar girl who came to beg for alms, it's you who failed to maintain your balance, yet you still need to blame others."

The Little Princess's face had been caked in filth and dirt by Chen Nan. The clothes on her body were shabby garments that Chen Nan had found for her. Hearing these words from the yellow-clothed girl, she abruptly shrieked, "Smelly girl, how dare you contradict I, a... a young lady. Xiao Yu, teach her a merciless lesson for me!"

The Tiger King Xiao Yu let out a thunderous roar. Opening his jaws, a streak of lightning shot out. The powerful electrical current rang through the air, 'bilipala'.

The gigantic golden bird also opened its metal-like beak. A blade of wind shot out. The wind blade and the lightning bolt collided in midair, erupting in a dazzling explosion of radiance. Finally, the magical energy of both attacks dissipated, leaving behind no traces.

The yellow-clothed masked girl said, "Your Tiger King and my Great Peng are both magical beasts capable of growth, but my Great Peng has already reached the second rank, while your Tiger King still only sits at the first rank. If we had them compete, it truly would be considered bullying on our part. I had come here with a heart filled with hope, yet I wind up returning, disappointed—how truly disappointing!"

The princess coldly humped, "Pei! Bullshit! You're utterly pretentious riding atop that giant, fat duck. If I let you ride a big, dumb goose, you'd still consider everything to be fine and dandy."

"Little girl, how dare you speak so rudely to me. I need to teach you a heartfelt lesson."

"Old woman, I'm not afraid of you."

"I am a lady in my prime, yet you still dare call me old? I won't spare you, you little beggar!"

"I'll do it! Old woman, old woman, you're too old!"

"Great Peng, charge! We'll go teach that little beggar a lesson together!"

"Xiao Yu, go! Breathe fire; I want to eat a fat, roasted duck!"

"Sloppy little beggar, you don't even wash your face. I'm embarrassed for you. I'll use my magic to help clean your face. Water Dragon's Wave!" The masked girl put into use her water element spells. Not only did it extinguish the raging fire breathed out by the Tiger King, but a large portion of it also splashed towards the Little Princess.

Without warning, the princess was drenched with a splash. She loudly shrieked, "Old woman, how dare you sneak attack me... Xiao Yu, electrocute her!"

...

Chen Nan once heard someone joke: the quarrel between two women is equivalent to the shouting of five hundred ducks. He currently felt as if there were three thousand ducks in the sky, flying, flying, flying...

Although the Tiger King had previously been a third ranked magical beast, the wounds he had suffered that day had been too great, causing

him to drop to the first rank. In front of the second ranked Great Peng, he repeatedly roared and howled, without any way out.

The power in the princess's body had been completely sealed by Chen Nan. She was simply powerless and unable to withstand the magical attacks from the masked girl in yellow. She ordered Xiao Yu to head towards the east to hide, crying out in fear.

"Old woman, I don't want to play anymore. Hurry and stop."

"You still dare call me an old woman? Fire, blades of wind..." The Little Princess received wave after wave of the magical attacks launched by the masked girl in yellow. The spells arrived endlessly.

"Old woman, if you stop, I'll stop calling you that..."

"Sloppy beggar, how long will you be reluctant to admit your mistakes?"

The princess hadn't been able to show off her ability. Inwardly hating Chen Nan, she couldn't stop herself from cursing in the sky, "Damn degenerate, smelly bastard, shameless smelly thief, you're killing me! Sooner or later, I will kill you!"

The masked girl in yellow angrily called out, "Sloppy little beggar, how dare you insult me like this? I'm not finished with you yet today."

On the ground, Chen Nan heartily chuckled. He knew the princess had created a great misunderstanding this time.

"Old woman, I'm cursing that shameless smelly thief, not you...!" screamed the princess as she received the tremendous magical attack coming from behind her. She attempted to explain herself.

"You truly anger me to death. I wonder how long it will take you, little girl, to admit your mistakes."

"Old woman, hurry, stop~"

"Lightning, blades of wind, ice knives...!"

"Save me~!"

Guan Hao strenuously dragged himself up off the ground. With a still dizzy mind, he looked up into the sky to find the princess receive another dazzling magical attack.

Astonished, he couldn't help but mutter, "Oh God, you've blessed me with a show of your power. With that fierce magic, please firmly teach that little witch a lesson."

Chen Nan shouted at the sky, "Little demon, if you don't quickly descend, you'll soon visit hell and have a reunion with your sisters. If you call me your master, I'll come help you."

"Pei! Damn degenerate, I hate you so much! I'll never ask you for protection. Ah~! Old woman, don't attack me! Let's make up."

"Freezing Spell!"

"Ah~! Save me! Old woman, I surrender~!"

The cries of a bird and the roars of a tiger thundered through the sky like rolls of thunder.

The masked girl in yellow was definitely not trying to kill the princess. The lightning, blades of wind, and other spells all possessed powerful, murderous magic, but none of it directly landed on the princess's body. They merely continuously whistled passed her ears. Only the water magic constantly hit her. This resulted in drenching the princess head to toe.

Despite these circumstances, the princess continued to scream repeatedly in fear.

Finally, she was forced into a corner with no way out. She helplessly begged Chen Nan, "Degenerate, hurry and come save me! Drive back this old woman!"

With a loud voice, Chen Nan said, "Hurry and come down, or else I can't help you."

The princess directed Xiao Yu to quickly drop to the ground. The golden, gigantic bird was in hot pursuit.

"Sloppy little beggar, I'll send you a popsicle to eat!" With that said, the

masked girl in yellow uttered a spell. The temperature of the area surrounding the princess rapidly dropped. A layer of frost formed on her drenched clothes in an instant.

"So cold! Old woman, stop~!"

When the princess arrived on the ground, her body was already covered in a thin layer of ice. Her eyebrows and hair were plastered with frost. Her frozen face turned blue, and her body trembled like a leaf.

"Old woman... get down here... the two of us aren't finished yet..." The princess's voice was shivering.

"Haha! Sloppy little beggar, I won't play with you anymore. I'm going."

"Gutless ghost... If you have the ability... come battle me again!"

"Hehe! Sloppy little beggar, if you want revenge, you can come find me at Shengfeng Institute." With that, the masked girl in yellow soared away atop her giant golden bird. In the blink of an eye, she disappeared off into the direction towards the City of Crime.

The Little Princess angrily stamped her feet over and over again. She cried out, "Old woman, don't run away!"

Chen Nan found this incredibly amusing. A quarrel between women was indeed fascinating. Not only were their bodies moving around, but their mouths also blew up storms.

Although it was a scorching hot summer day, the princess was shivering in frigid cold. After she finished cursing the masked girl in yellow, she furiously said to Chen Nan, "Degenerate, quickly neutralize that lousy finger technique you placed on me. If you hadn't sealed my power, how could I have been bullied by that old woman?"

"It was you who first spoke rudely. If not, why would others come trouble you for no reason whatsoever? If you want me to neutralize the power of the God of Imprisonment's Finger, I can, but you must write a contract selling yourself to me to prove that you're my maid."

"Never in a thousand years! Not even in your dreams!" The princess angrily said, "That's right! If I recall, I have a contract in my possession that states you are to serve as my slave! I think I left it at palace... I left it in my study. If I have the chance, I'll definitely take it out and publicize it to everyone! Shameless degenerate, I'll completely sully your reputation! I'll have everyone know that you're my slave."

"Little demon, you still dare bring up the things that happened at the western border of Chu? Tonight, you must accompany me in my bed!"

## Volume 3 Chapter 6: God's Left Hand

"Pei! Damn degenerate, you can't get any more shameless! Just wait until my teacher recovers from his injury; he'll definitely come looking for me here. When that time comes, you'll be left dead without a proper burial site."

The princess's abrupt mentioning of her teacher truly gave Chen Nan a fright. Even though Zhuge Chengfeng's supreme cultivation was not as profound as that old monster's, he still wasn't too far off.

Remembering how there were two remarkable experts that could come knocking on his door at any point in time, he grew nervous. Even the superior old monster was unable to neutralize his God of Imprisonment's Finger, however, which relieved him from some stress.

"Why hasn't that old monster shown himself yet? Did he actually follow us?"

The princess said, "Smelly thief, what are you muttering about? Are you scared? If you're scared, hurry up and release me, and perhaps I might still spare your life."

"Release your head. If you don't behave, I'll immediately punish you."

Although the princess was beyond indignant, she was mostly intimidated. She angrily crawled back onto the Tiger King Xiao Yu's back and said, "Xiao Yu, let's go. Let's get some distance from this bastard."

Chen Nan said, "Don't go flying wildly around on your lustful tiger. You just attracted the ire of some eccentric woman; you don't want to provoke even more terrifying people. The God of Imprisonment's Finger I placed on you will resurface soon. If you stray too far away from me, don't come looking for me when you suffer."

Although the princess was furious enough to take a life, she didn't have any alternative. Guan Hao chuckled furtively from the side—and was caught by Xiao Yu. With a roar, he scared away Guan Hao.

From behind, Chen Nan cried out, "Hey, don't run away so fast!"

Without turning his head, Guan Hao shouted back, "I have something urgent to attend to, so I must leave first."

The princess yelled after him, "Damn rat, you haven't said goodbye to me yet!"

Guan Hao's voice echoed from the distance: "See you, little witch—no—I never want to see you again!"

The princess angrily said, "Damn rat, you can't run from me. I'm also headed to Shengfeng Institute."

A wretched scream could be heard from the distance: "God... save me!"

Chen Nan loudly chuckled. "It seems like in comparison, you're simply more frightening than even natural disasters and beasts... Ai!"

The princess shot him a fierce glance. She embraced the Tiger King, who had already transformed back into the size of a kitten, and stepped forward.

"Degenerate, I need to go to Shenfeng Institute." After taming Xiao Yu, the notion of fleeing had made many a pass through her mind, but she was worried about the God of Imprisonment's Finger's symptoms suddenly flaring up. Ultimately, she decided to go to Shenfeng Institute. It was rumoured that there, the experts were as common as clouds. There must be some supreme master hidden among them that she could ask for help in releasing her body from the imprisonment.

"No. I don't want to look for trouble," Chen Nan immediately refused.

Upon entering the City of Crime, a spectacular scene of prosperity presented itself. The fact that this city was hidden so deep within the mountains was nearly inconceivable. The pedestrians walking about were countless, and the cries of ongoing transactions endlessly fell upon open ears.

There were many different ethnicities within the city. With one glance at the street, one could see black hair, blonde hair, red hair, blue hair...

After entering the city, the princess suddenly became excited. The first thing she did was reach out and snatch a bingtanghulu skewer from the hands of a local seller. She then turned her head and went the other way.

The distressed man shouted after her rather straightforwardly, "Young lady, you haven't paid me yet."

The princess turned around and said, "Request it from my attendant following me." She pointed at Chen Nan.

Chen Nan simply smacked her upside the head. In pain, the princess nearly fell over in tears. She angrily ran headlong down the street. However, Chen Nan still had to obediently pay the seller who pushed his way in front of Chen Nan's path.

After pressing into the city for more than one li, the princess had already incurred the wrath of countless people.

With great difficulty, Chen Nan finally captured her. "Please! Little demon, you don't have to act like a child and take whatever you want. You don't even feel embarrassed—it makes me even more ashamed."

The Little Princess was the Emperor of Chu's youngest daughter. Ordinarily, she truly could be considered as heaven's arrogant daughter. Almost no one dared to oppose her. But day after day of suffering made her feel wronged. Going on a shopping spree helped her vent her pent up anger.

Finally, the two of them arrived at an inn.

At night, the princess's symptoms from the God of Imprisonment's Finger flared up. The pain caused her to cry out and curse. Chen Nan helped cleanse her blood vessels in order to alleviate her pain.

After the princess washed off the hardships of journeying off of her

body, she put on a new set of clothes. When she walked into the room, the entire place seemed to shine. Her black hair, gorgeous complexion, and elegant body emanated a captivating charisma.

After Chen Nan washed up, he felt as if the exhaustion from travelling was spirited away. Now, seeing the gorgeous princess enter and illuminate the room, he felt even more pleased and couldn't help but steal a couple more glances.

The princess perceptively looked over at him, truly afraid of his 'boiling excitement'.

"Damn degenerate, you're sickening. Stop showing off your heart's watchful eye. I want to book another room. Today, I, the princess, will not endure your menacing presence no matter what. I must stay in a different room than you."

"How is that okay? There are many bad people here. For the sake of safety, we'll stick with the traditional custom: one room, two beds."

"Pei! Is there anyone as bad as you in this world?"

"I'm a good person..."

"Shameless! Hmph, we've already arrived at the City of Crime, aren't you afraid of me running away? If I want to run, I have many opportunities. If you won't book it, I will." With that said, the princess embraced Xiao Yu and ran out.

But right when she ran outside into the courtyard, she cried out, "Xiao Yu, hurry and transform! Let's quickly flee!"

Xiao Yu released a roar that shook the inn. All the guests staying inside were petrified.

When Chen Nan arrived, the princess and Xiao Yu had already soared up into the sky.

"Hey, little demon, where are you going?"

"I think staying beside a degenerate like you is too dangerous. Xiao Yu and I will stay somewhere else."

"Little demon, aren't you afraid of my God of Imprisonment's Finger?"

"Bastard, smelly thief, scoundrel..." The princess cursed at first, but she finally said, "When the time comes, I'll find you. Damn degenerate, I curse you to have bad luck from today onwards. Farewell."

With the blink of an eye, a white ray of light disappeared above the inn.

Although many people from inside the inn asked him what had happened, Chen Nan uniformly ignored them all, as if not a single word reached his ears.

"This little girl is way too diligent. Little demon..." Chen Nan wasn't afraid of the princess escaping. He believed that before the God of

Imprisonment's Finger erupted again, she'd definitely obediently return.

Early the next morning, after Chen Nan ate breakfast, he began leisurely strolling around the City of Crime.

The City of Crime was enormous. In half a day's time, he barely made a trip around only half of the eastern regions of the city.

"Old Poison Devil should've came here, too. How can I find him? Forget it, that old guy won't just hide around here—he'll be having the time of his life. I won't go looking for him; eventually, I'll run into him."

At noon, he stepped into a restaurant and took a window seat on the upper floor. He ordered several dishes and a jug of wine. As he drank, he looked down at the streams of people on the street unceasingly flowing back and forth.

After downing over a dozen cups of strong wine, he already began to sense the light sensation of intoxication sweep through him. He said to himself mockingly, "Life is but a dream. Who could guess I'm someone from ten thousand years ago? After the passage of ten thousand years, I've come back to life!"

Under the haze of intoxication, his heart fluttered in lamentation. He was originally a man from the past, but he was unexpectedly resurrected from the ancient Shen Mu. This was a bit hard to imagine even for him.

In Shenmo Cemetery, excluding the buried experts who were once at the epitome of power and other strange, top-ranked practitioners who

were laid to rest, at every tomb was buried either a god or devil. When he had died, his cultivation had only been so-so. For him to be buried there, there must be some ulterior motive. The fact that his lowly, small resting place had been void of a tombstone supported this theory. His 'corpse' was apparently not on the same level as the others. He couldn't see the reason clearly. He was obscured by layers of dense fog and couldn't see past it and couldn't understand it!

After residing in that small town at the western borders of Chu for a year, Chen Nan had continuously adjusted his mentality. His once lost self gradually shed the shadows from the past. He gradually began to consider himself as a modern man. Massive changes were hidden in the deepest depths of his heart. But for the sake of living a better life, he could merely suppress it all at the bottom of his heart.

"External matters are simple, internal matters are complex. Everyone's mind and heart are different. But for the sake of living, no one fails to put on an act, concealing the truth and presenting a lie." Chen Nan gradually lost himself in his thoughts. His past resurfaced in his thoughts: the figures of Yu Xin, Tantai Xuan, and others swept through his mind one after another.

"Which path should I take this life? Perhaps the first thing I should do is explore the secrets of Shenmo Cemetery. If I can't even understand how and why I came back to life, how can my heart feel at ease? Shenmo Cemetery... Shenmo... In this life, I will endlessly pursue the remnants of Shenmo..."

Intoxication swept Chen Nan off his feet, and he gradually lost himself to the alcohol as he lied on top of the table. In his state of drunkenness, he sensed several male and female youths walk upstairs.

"How can this drunk be in possession of such a fine seat beside the window? Boss, can you move this guy away? We want to sit here." This voice sounded like that of a young man. Although these were casual words, they nevertheless carried a commanding aura.

One woman said, "Forget it, don't make trouble. We can sit at that empty table over there."

The other youths nodded in agreement and began walking over to the table.

After the youths finished ordering their dishes, they ate as they chatted.

"This semester's exam problem is too hard. Making us investigate the lost God's Left Hand is too much."

"I suspect those fossils at the college are purposely making things difficult for us."

"That's right. It's something straight out of a legend—its very existence should be questioned."

"You guys must've not been listening very carefully. Those fossils added that there were other exam problems that you could choose from."

"God, I want to kill that guy! Why hasn't any told me this earlier? If I can't find any clues leading to the God's Hand, how can I even get a

single point of credit..."

"Wu... I didn't hear this either."

...

"But that legend is seriously outrageous. Thousands of years ago, two gods once fought a great battle in the nearby mountains. Do you guys think it's true?"

"It's possible. Those mountains really do seem like they have been through incredible battles."

"It's too exaggerated. There were avalanches, diverted rivers, lakes drying up, and other things all happening there—it just doesn't really seem like the result of a battle."

"Why can't it be? They're gods, not humans. Besides, it's a battle between two gods trying their best to kill one another."

"Tell me, what do you guys think is being held in the hand that was cut off of the god? What could it possibly be to force two gods into risking their lives to fight over it?"

"It must be something extraordinary. For two gods to attach so much importance to it, we probably can't even begin to imagine the possibilities."

"If we can really find the severed God's Hand and obtain whatever it's holding, maybe we will embark on an unimaginable adventure."

"You're dreaming. So many experts have failed to find it, how can we possibly hold up? I just hope we can find some clues and at least get some credits from that fossil."

...

"Right now, those old pedants are translating the ancient text on that old sheepskin scroll. In a few nights' time, we'll find out whether or not it was a mistake to choose this exam problem."

"That's right, how convenient."

"The person who recorded it all thousands of years ago was actually fortunate enough to be blessed with the chance to watch two gods battle and see one god chop off the hand of another. It's inconceivable!"

"That guy was also unfortunate. He spent a lifetime searching in the mountains, but he never found the God's Left Hand."

"Do you guys think that ancient sheepskin scroll's written account is true? I feel like it's just a legend."

"Stories of gods are obviously just legends"

"The City of Crime's native inhabitants have all said that a battle

between gods happened here. It was so long ago that the story that has been passed down must be filled with irrelevancies and exaggerations—there's no actual useful information. But thinking about it, the stuff written on that ancient sheepskin is probably true."

"I've heard many practitioners of the continent are already hurrying over here. In the near future, the City of Crime will definitely be busy."

"Right, but it just creates more troubles with our problem."

"I didn't think a battle between gods that happened millennia ago would still attract such a big crowd."

"Just being able to see the battlefield would render people excited. If I had that sort of godly power, in this world, who'd be able to stand against me?"

"You're dreaming. If you had that sort of power, what the hell would you do with it?"

"The first thing I'd do is head to the Empire of Chu and ask the Eldest Princess's hand in marriage. I've heard she's a woman who possesses beauty capable of destroying a country!"

"Haha~!"

Everyone laughed out loud.

"Don't laugh, you guys! That Chu Yue is truly that beautiful—like a fairy! Even other girls who see her are moved. It is said that she has a younger sister who's only sixteen, but her looks are not at all inferior. In another two years, the world will gain another exceptional beauty."

"Their looks aren't that far above others. I think the rumoured beauties at our college are not any way inferior to the Empire of Chu's princesses."

"You lechers, can't you at least gossip quieter? If someone were to hear you guys, then we might attract trouble."

"Right, be careful of misfortune coming from the mouth!"

"Let's eat fast so we can head out quickly."

After the youths went back downstairs, Chen Nan lifted his head up off the table. Although he was muddled, he still overheard the recent conversation.

"Boss, give me the bill."

"Coming."

"Here. Keep the change."

Chen Nan casually tossed the boss, beaming in delight, a gold coin.

"Wait a moment, I have something I want to ask you."

The boss said, "Please go right ahead."

"Were those youths that were just here students from Shengfeng Institute?"

"Your vision is as bright as a torch. Those arrogant children of heaven are indeed students from Shengfeng Institute."

"Arrogant children of heaven? Aren't they just some students?"

The proprietor of the restaurant laughed. "Are you not a native or a practitioner?"

Chen Nan grumbled a yes in response.

"No wonder. Let me tell you, the youngsters who are admitted to Shengfeng Institute are all out of the ordinary. If they aren't some relative of royalty, then they're true ranked experts. The college is filled with hidden talent... Many of the influential individuals of the continent have graduated from Shengfeng Institute. Those few youths that were here a moment ago, one was a small state's prince, another was a nation's prefectural lord..."

Chen Nan wobbly returned back to the inn. After entering his room, his head hit the pillow.

Because of the poor sound-proofing of the room's walls, the conversation between two people from the room next door could be clearly heard. Their distinct words landed in Chen Nan's ears.

"Many strange things have happened in these past few days."

"What's up?"

"There's been a strange number of pigeons in the sky."

"Pft. So what? These days, the severed God's Hand has caused quite a hubbub. Do you think someone has enough free time on their hands to release a bunch of pigeons for fun? Those are all messenger pigeons heading everywhere across the continent in order to relay news."

"Even if those were just a bunch of pigeons flying around, today, I actually saw a flying tiger in the sky."

"You were daydreaming."

"What daydreaming? Did you forget about those tiger's roars we heard last night? Most likely, they came from the flying tiger that I saw. How else could there be a tiger roaming the city?"

"You... you actually saw a flying tiger?"

"I absolutely did. It was in the direction of the eastern end of the city. Every so often, it would appear again."

...

"That little demon has been showing off so brazenly..." After Chen Nan washed his face, he left the inn and headed towards the eastern end of the city. When he arrived at the river encircling the city, he saw five or six people staggeringly fleeing across a bridge.

He stopped one of them and asked, "What's going on?"

The man said, "A flying tiger demon has appeared in the east. A girl is riding it as they plunder everyone."

"What?!" Chen Nan's jaw dropped in shock. He didn't think the Little Princess would actually begin committing thievery.

The man had a traumatized appearance. After his explanation, he quickly ran deeper into the city.

As Chen Nan walked, he came across several more victims who were 'ambushed by a bandit'. These people were left in even worse states: they were scorched black—it was obviously the doing of Xiao Yu's lightning.

"This little girl has caused a huge ruckus."

In the distance, he could see the princess wearing clothes that fluttered in the wind. Her face was covered by a veil. Mounted on top of the Tiger King, she flew around in the sky.

"Hand over all your money to me."

A few people on the ground were shivering in fear. They abandoned whatever gold coins they had on the ground and escaped like they had seen ghosts.

Chen Nan felt both happy and amused. The Little Princess of the grand Empire of Chu, descended from golden branches and jade leaves, actually dared to do something so shady.

"Little demon, what the hell are you doing?"

"Ah! Damn degenerate, you came. Xiao Yu, fly a bit higher." The princess didn't descend to collect her belongings, opting to order Xiao Yu to climb to higher altitudes instead.

"Little demon, y-you're actually looting people? Aren't you afraid news of this will reach the ears of your daddy the emperor?"

"Smelly thief, degenerate, scoundrel, bastard..." After the princess sent out a barrage of insults, she said, "I need clothes. I need to eat. I need to live at an inn. But all the money is in your hands, you bastard. I have no money, so I have resorted to making my own money."

"What! Th-this is you making money? This is looting. It's a crime! If you need money, can't you just come ask me?"

"Pei! There's no way I'd ask anything from you, you damn smelly thief. I'll rely on myself and earn my own living."

"Oh, please. Don't sully the two phrases 'self-reliance' and 'earning your own living', alright? What you're doing is robbing commoners—no different than what bandits do."

"Rubbish. I'm robbing the rich to help the poor, making money."

"What 'making money'? Frankly, you're straight up robbing people. Let me ask you, how many of the poor have you helped?"

"I haven't seen any poor people yet. Everyone I've encountered so far has been rich."

"You..." Chen Nan was speechless. After a pause, he said, "You sure are fierce—you haven't let off a single person."

"Smelly thief, leave already. Don't delay my moneymaking."

"You... How many people have you robbed? Isn't that more than enough spending money?"

"It's not enough. I spend my money quickly—my expenses are great. En, I have decided to rob you. Hand over all the money you have on your person to me."

Chen Nan suddenly laughed. "Little demon, you want money, but

became crazy instead. You actually want to rob me? If you have the ability, come take it yourself."

"Hmph! I'm not playing with you. If you don't obediently take out all the money you have, when I'm moneymaking, I'll say my name is Chen Nan."

"You..."

"Scared? Take out all your money and hand it over"

"No way am I scared." With that said, Chen Nan bent over and began gathering up the princess's 'spoils and loot' off of the ground.

Up in the sky, the princess shrieked, "Degenerate, you're shameless! What the hell are you doing? That's the money I earned! Don't move! Put it down!"

Chen Nan laughed. "I've been a little tight on money recently. Why don't you help me out a bit?"

The princess was enraged. On top of Xiao Yu, she dived down from the sky. She insulted and scolded Chen Nan, "Damn degenerate, you're a bandit, a thief! You dare take my money? When I'm moneymaking, I'll be sure to inform everyone that I'm called Chen Nan!"

"If you dare do that, then when the God of Imprisonment's Finger flares up, don't come looking for me."

"Shameless, low-life, despicable... I curse you to be robbed by a thief when you enter the city..." After the princess's fierce insults, she rode Xiao Yu flying into the distance like a streak of lightning. In the blink of an eye, she disappeared into the sky.

Chen Nan sighed, "This little girl is truly troublesome. I can't believe she is actually engaging in these shady acts. I wonder what other ridiculous things she'll do. But it truly is strange. Why does she need so much money? Maybe it's..."

He recalled the effort Guan Hao had made in order to earn money. "Does that little demon also want to enter Shenfeng Institute?"

"Does this college really have hidden experts like the outside world gossips about? Eh, how about I go take a look for myself tonight."

# **Volume 3: The City of Crime**

## **Chapter 7: Shengfeng Institute**

The stars sparkled in the flowing night sky.

Under the faint glow of the starlight, a figure exited the inn like a wisp of smoke and, with a few horizontal flashes, disappeared down the end of the street.

This person was Chen Nan. During the day, he had gleaned from others the approximate whereabouts of Shengfeng Institute. Under the nighttime's cloak of darkness, he sped towards the college.

The City of Crime's nightlife was not at all mundane. Many places were brightly lit up all night long: casinos rambled on endlessly, the cries and whistles of fireworks...

After traversing across many streets and paths, Shengfeng Institute appeared within Chen Nan's sights. The college was bigger than he had imagined. It was roughly the size of one fifth of the entire eastern district of the city. The simple gate and blue-green steps exhibited the wear and tear of years of service. There was also an air of dignity and holiness that pervaded the college—the ancient college's aura.

Countless experts had emerged from here and displayed their

brilliance all across the continent. When they recalled their former days of glory, not one of them could forget their origin: Shengfeng Institute.

Chen Nan calmly stood outside of the college's gate. He really could feel a peculiar aura. An indescribable, complex feeling arose in his heart: admiration, veneration...

"Accumulate the world's spiritual power; gather the auras of generation upon generation of supreme experts. This is truly the paradise of practitioners. Shengfeng Institute's reputation is well-deserved. Even standing here for just a moment has greatly moved me."

Chen Nan sprang up and scaled the tall wall. After a careful inspection and not finding anything suspicious, he lightly fluttered inside. At this time, Shengfeng Institute was silent. Only a few rooms were still lit up. Like a midnight ghost, he went to wander around the college.

As he passed through an enormous practice arena, he found several people still cultivating inside. Magic elements intensely pulsated through the air. One could imagine how extraordinary this magus' cultivation was. He didn't dare tread too closely and only observed from a distance. There seemed to be two magi battling.

"En! If I were able to experience real combat with someone every day, how much faster would my cultivation improve?"

Chen Nan suddenly felt compelled to enter Shengfeng Institute, but he calmly shook his head with a chuckle.

"If I want a real battle, coming here and causing a ruckus is enough; why would I need to become a student, hehheh..." He was certain of one thing: he would be doomed to a troublesome life if he were to stay here for any prolonged period of time.

Chen Nan wandered all over the place and found that there were seven, eight more practice arenas as large as the one before. Not only that, but there were people cultivating everywhere.

"The students here are truly diligent!"

Roaming about, he arrived deep inside the college. A scenic lake appeared before him. The water seemed like a mirror, reflecting the heavenly stars. The leisurely sound of a flute lightly drifted from the surface of the lake. A gentle woe was hidden away within the flute's melody.

Chen Nan carefully scoured the place for quite a while, but was unable to locate the flutist. He was somewhat apprehensive. "Could this person's cultivation be that much greater than my own?"

He clandestinely detoured around the small lake and continued onward.

A boy and a girl sat on a pair of chairs at the side of a flowerbed. They were quietly chatting. The mood was intimate.

"It's a pair of 'mandarin ducks'." He wanted to detour around them, but their conversation struck his fancy.

He heard the girl say, "This flute music is so sad—somber and gloomy."

The boy said, "This flute music has been playing here since the college was first established. According to the legend, it's the ghost of a girl who hasn't been put to rest yet. Whenever the starlight is especially bright, she would play this echoing music. Another legend says there's an ancient immortal below the surface residing in an ancient formation, and that flute sound is nothing more but the worldly sound of the formation in use."

The girl said, "I believe in the first legend more."

The boy said, "If only it were true. I'm afraid even our president isn't sure of it."

Upon hearing this, Chen Nan felt a burst of unease. He inwardly said, "I didn't expect this college would actually have such a peculiar place hidden away. If I get the chance, I'll go carefully explore it." He didn't continue eavesdropping on them and went around the two sweethearts.

Continuing forward, a mountainous area appeared before him. Two short mountains stood side by side with a distance of three li in between them. Chen Nan inwardly sighed in praise and astonishment. Shengfeng Institute deserved its reputation as a millennium-old college that even had within it a lake and a mountain range. It was truly tremendous.

When he neared the mountains, he discovered many large caves perforating the sides. It seemed like there were a few monsters hidden within the caves. Upon careful inspection into the caves, he discovered

that there were actually dragons stowed within the mountain! There were Land Dragons, Flying Dragons, and Auxiliary Dragons! He imagined that even Monolithic Dragons were in the caves that were several tens of zhang wide that were higher up the mountain. This place was actually the residence of dragons.

Chen Nan was truly amazed. He sighed. "There's surprisingly this many dragons. It seems like there are at least several tens of dragon riders attending Shengfeng Institute. It's true—experts are as common as clouds here!"

After peering at the dragons for another moment, he continued his exploration. He carefully passed through the mountains and arrived at the deepest depth of the college. A dense forest appeared behind the short mountains. Inside was nothing but shadows as far as the eye could see. It left a heavy, stifling impression on anyone viewing it from the outside.

Chen Nan hesitated but ultimately decided to enter. The forest was dark and the shrubbery and trees were impenetrable. Additionally, the land was vast. After a long time, he finally made his way through the trees. When he finally left the canopy of the trees, his heart shook. In front of him, surprisingly, was a cemetery. It faintly glowed, and the ghostly qi was dense and horrifying.

He readied himself and circled the cemetery once. He determined that this was actually the resting place of Shengfeng Institute's generational experts. This was already at the end of Shengfeng Institute, yet a high wall surrounded the graveyard, and a river could be heard in the surroundings.

"How inauspicious to have come to such a ghostly place." He followed his way back.

Chen Nan had more or less made a trip around the college. As he was leaving, when he was passing through a courtyard, a door suddenly opened. A long-haired girl, as if just woken up, came outside. She abruptly saw Chen Nan and immediately shrieked, "A pervert! Help! There's a lewd thief here! A rapist!" Screaming like this in the dead of night was particularly noticeable. All the buildings nearby immediately lit up with candlelight.

Chen Nan greatly sighed at his misfortune. He actually trespassed on the female dormitory. He urgently jumped up onto the roof.

"Lecher, stand still! Don't run! Sisters, quickly come out and catch that pervert~!" In a flash, all the girls' rooms were brightly lit. The girls—many of whom were not yet fully dressed—rushed out of their rooms. Fragrant perfume blew forth. The female dormitory was quite lively.

"Damn this girl, she couldn't come our earlier or later, she had to come out just now! I'll flee flee flee... No matter what, I can't let the college's elders catch me. If they do, even if I dive into the Yellow River, I still won't be clean."

"Catch the pervert! Don't let him get away!"

"Where's the pervert?"

"On top of that roof! Hurry and get him!"

...

Fortunately, because it was the middle of the night, almost everyone was asleep. Even the practice arena had become void of activity long ago. Chen Nan fled from Shengfeng Institute panicking the whole way. Behind him, the students' living quarters were chaotic. Even more girls flew out, and many boys who heard the chaos also rushed out. The situation devolved into an army chasing a single intruder.

It could be said that Chen Nan's untapped potential sprang forth at that moment. His speed could be said to be the fastest ever reached by mankind since the beginning of history. In a state of panic, he arrived at the college's great wall at long last. With a leap and a drop, he disappeared over the wall and down the street.

Not long after he escaped, ten or so figures arrived outside the college's gate. They looked in the direction that Chen Nan had fled but did not give chase.

An elderly voice said, "Hmm, this youngster is pretty interesting. I'll take note when he's admitted to Shengfeng Institute. His potential is not bad."

Another aged voice said, "For you to take an interest in someone, that person must be pretty good. But that youth has an even greater potential to be a rapist. Look at the wind generated from his feet as he left without a trace."

...

The ten or so elderly voices quietly said a few more words to one another before uniformly returning back inside Shenheng Institute. When they vanished, a few students from within the college finally arrived.

"Where's that pervert?"

"We have to catch that pervert!"

"He's seriously disgusting. How dare this guy have plans on the girls of our college? His lust encompasses the heavens!"

"Let's split up and search."

...

Countless male students volunteered to join an expedition searching the city, while only a few girls joined.

At that time, Chen Nan had already ran back to the inn. When the search conducted by the male population of Shenheng Institute finally concluded, he was already asleep. If he had known that those elders had detected his trespassing into Shenheng Institute the moment he had stepped foot inside the gate, then he definitely would not have been able to have a peaceful rest.

The next day, there wasn't much gossip of Chen Nan's nighttime exploration of Shenheng Institute. Instead, there was another shocking

piece of news that made its way around the city: a flying tiger was plundering and thieving near the City of Crime. A flying tiger mounted by a great bandit was committing the serious crime of plundering and stealing the belongings of countless people in the City of Freedom.

When Chen Nan heard of this, he was stupefied. In the short span of a single day, the Little Princess had already become a 'celebrity' in the City of Freedom.

"This damn girl. She doesn't resemble a princess at all! Dammit, I have to quickly catch her, or else she'll cause a lot of problems soon."

There were many people at the inn talking about the Great Flying Tiger Thief.

"The City of Crime hasn't had anyone dare be so arrogant like this in ages. The practitioners of Shenfeng Institute will be forced to act."

"Have you guys heard? Before that guy robs you, he surprisingly announces his name first."

Hearing this, Chen Nan's heart trembled.

"That's right, I hear he's called Chen Bei."

...

When Chen Nan heard this, even the roots of his teeth throbbed in

anger. The princess was obviously goading him. He visited many inns and taverns but failed to find any trace of the princess, but he did find many practitioners who had come from all over Tianyuan Continent. He knew almost all of them had come for the ancient god's severed hand.

"When the little demon first realized the situation was getting tense, she must've gone into hiding. That little girl's vigilance is commendable. It really is hard to find her."

After a few days, there still wasn't any news of the Little Princess.

"The little demon didn't get caught by anyone, right? If this little girl were to suffer an unexpected accident, her father the Emperor of Chu will definitely send everyone to kill me at all costs." But when he recalled the princess's sly disposition, he realized there was no reason for his concern.

"Maybe she already robbed enough people and went to enrol in Shengfeng Institute."

The more Chen Nan thought, the more realistic this notion seemed. He decided to go take a look.

This time, he arrived at Shengfeng Institute candidly. The millennium-old college glowed under the holy brilliance of the morning sun. There were quite a few people walking through the gate, many of whom were young students. Experts were as common as clouds inside the college. He wasn't afraid of anyone jumping out to challenge him for trespassing—there was simply no one guarding the gate. Chen Nan directly walked inside.

Although he had already gone on a rough tour around campus previously, he only remembered the approximate layout. As for where every courtyard was located, he had absolutely no idea.

After passing through three layers of courtyards, he pulled a young man to the side and asked, "Brother, hello. May I ask where I should go if I wish to enrol in Shengfeng Institute?"

The youth said, "It's inside the courtyards over there, but registration isn't open right now. You can come register here at the start of every month, so you'll have to wait about a week."

"Oh, many thanks." Chen Nan was now certain that the princess hadn't enrolled in Shengfeng Institute yet.

"No need to thank me," the youth said before turning to leave, but he suddenly stopped in his tracks. A bewildered expression covered his face as he said, "Too beautiful. Could this be the rumoured beauty of the Faculty of Magic?"

Chen Nan followed the youth's dazed eyes and his heart was immediately stunned. A slender girl with curves, around twenty years old, was leisurely approaching. The girl's long wavy black hair hung down to her chest. Her jade-like cheeks contained a poignant lustre. She had gorgeous eyes and a straight, refined nose. Her rosy lips, when pressed together, perfected her splendid complexion.

The beautiful girl fluttered over as if her beauty was sprouting to life. Her entire being embraced an ethereal, dignified temperament. When she saw Chen Nan, a puzzled look appeared on her face. Then, her

expression took a drastic turn. She pointed at Chen Nan with the magic wand in her right hand and exclaimed in surprise, "It's you!"

Chen Nan was startled. He felt that this girl's voice was extremely familiar. All of the sudden, he was able to associate this girl's voice with the voice of the girl that he had bumped into at the female dormitory. He sighed in his heart, "Is it actually her? No way. How can I be so unlucky?!"

He wanted to cry, but no tears came out. He quickly said, "I think you have the wrong person, I don't know you."

"Hmph! I've never gotten the wrong person before. The moment I set my eyes on you, I could already recognize you. I didn't think you'd have the guts to actually come back here."

When the youth at the side heard this, he promptly unsheathed his longsword from his waist. "Young lady, I'll gladly serve you."

"Stay back, I still have something I want to ask him."

Chen Nan was secretly anxious. If he were caught as a pervert, he could imagine the tragic ending that would befall of him.

"Beautiful girl, please, I really don't know you." With that said, he began to make his escape.

But the beautiful girl immediately used a flying spell and landed in front of him, barring his way. "Want to run? It won't be that easy! Everyone from this college has been searching all over to capture you

two."

"Huh?" Chen Nan stared blankly at her. He sensed that there was some sort of misunderstanding.

He let loose a smile on his face. "Hehe, so it's just a misunderstanding. We can just talk about it. You'll definitely realize I'm not the person you want to catch."

The beauty reprimanded, "Even now you still want to object? It's not like I've never seen you before. That time when I fought with that dumb girl in the sky, you were spectating. Don't think I didn't notice you."

Chen Nan suddenly realized that she was actually the masked girl that rode on that giant golden bird that day.

"Y-you're that old lady?" The instant those words left Chen Nan's mouth, regret was all he felt, but it was already too late to take it back.

When the beauty heard his words, her face twisted in anger. "You're even more abhorrent than that dumb girl!" She angrily gripped her magic wand and a fine electric arc sprang out from her fingers, crackle.

The youth standing at the side raised his longsword and pointed it at Chen Nan. "On behalf of this lady whose beauty is without rival, I will punish you."

"No need. Stay back, I want to teach this great thief a lesson by myself!"

Chen Nan stared blankly at her, but came back to his senses in a flash. This girl thought he was the princess's accomplice and the thief who had been robbing people atop a flying tiger.

"It's a misunderstanding! Beautiful young lady, please listen to my explanation."

"What can you possibly explain? You and that dumb girl have been robbing people all over the City of Crime making everyone nervous. If you mention the Great Flying Tiger Thief, there's no one who won't know of it. Besides, you're much more heinous than that dumb girl—you never appear, you only control that dumb girl's exploits from the shadows, but in fact, the mastermind behind it all is you! I suspect that that dumb girl is actually a sincere, kind girl who was corrupted by you. Not only are you a thief who has committed countless crimes, but you're also a shameless, disgusting person who corrupts others."

Chen Nan really felt like he had crashed into the southern wall. Not only had he become a great thief and an instigator as well, but that deceitful Little Princess had become some sincere, kind girl. All of the little demon's crimes were now attributed to him.

"Beautiful young lady, you have to distinguish right from wrong! We have only seen each other once in a hurry and there isn't any evidence of anything you just said, so how can you just arbitrarily decide that all those things were my doing?"

The beauty said, "You and her are accomplices. If you aren't the mastermind, then who is?"

"I-I split up with her the instant we entered the city. I have no relation to anything she has done." It was obvious that Chen Nan had no confidence. Although it was true that he had nothing to do with her crimes, from an outsider's point of view, he seemed quite suspicious.

"So you have absolutely nothing to do with her. In simple terms, you want all your guilt to be absolved?" The beauty pondered for a moment and continued, "If you want to prove your innocence, then please capture that dumb girl. Only if you can catch her will we know of the facts of the matter."

Chen Nan said, "I've already spent a few days looking for her, but I haven't found any clues."

The beauty replied, "I have some matters to attend to right now. Come back here tomorrow. The two of us will discuss her likes and dislikes and her habits. Then, the two of us will go look for her together."

Chen Nan thought, "Do you think you're some divine investigator? How can you catch that little demon with just a few pieces of information...?"

The beauty said, "Tomorrow, if you dare not come, I'll put up your picture all over the City of Freedom. Every expert from Shengfeng Institute will regard you as the Great Flying Tiger Thief and pursue you. Hmph. If that dumb girl's face hadn't been covered in so much filth, I would've put up pictures of her a long time ago and not have to go through so much trouble to catch her."

Chen Nan secretly grumbled. Watching the beauty gradually disappear,

he couldn't contain his curses: "God damn..."

The youth at the side gazing dumbly at the beauty's disappearing silhouette heard his cursing and grew furious: "Y-you dare curse Dongfang-xiaojie behind her back? I challenge you to a duel!" With that said, he thrust his longsword towards Chen Nan.

Chen Nan sighed emotionally. The influence of beauty can never be rivalled. He smiled. "When did I ever curse her? I was just a little angry for a moment and couldn't help but voice my feelings. May I ask what kind of person that Dongfang-xiaojie is?"

"She's a student in the Faculty of Magic, but you don't have any hope at all. You still have yet to prove your innocence." With that said, the youth turned and left.

"What the hell? I never said anything about being interested in her..."

Chen Nan quickly left Shenfeng Institute. He had just narrowly escaped becoming known as the 'Great Flying Tiger Thief'. If he stayed a bit longer, perhaps he'd become known as the 'Great Pervert'.

# Volume 3: The City of Crime

## Chapter 8: Remnants of a Godly Battle

After Chen Nan returned to the inn, he carefully mulled. He gradually deduced the Little Princess's whereabouts. Based off of her innate character, she absolutely wouldn't be able to stay in a quiet place. Wherever there was a ruckus was wherever she would be. Most likely, she had gone off in search of the ancient god's severed hand.

"That damn little demon can never be satisfied with peace and quiet. For God's sake, please don't cause me any more problems!"

The next day, he forced himself back to Shenfeng Institute. From afar, he could make out the figure of the stunning woman standing outside the great gate. Beside her stood her giant golden Roc.

"I'll consider you tactful. You didn't miss your appointment, or else you would have died." The gorgeous woman was dressed in purple. An air of splendour surrounded her being.

Chen Nan said, "How could I dare? In order to prove my innocence, even if I had to brave a flurry of daggers and waves of inferno, I'd still come. Uh, young lady, how should I address you?"

"My surname is Dongfang, my name is Fenghuang."

Chen Nan was dumbstruck. This was certainly a name with personality [1]. If this name were attributed to someone else, he would have laughed out loud at them, but the beautiful lady in front of him was indeed worthy of sharing a name with a phoenix.

[tl: [1] = 東方鳳凰/Dongfang Fenghuang literally means 'Eastern Phoenix'. ]

"A good name, Fenghuang..."

"Shut up. I am not your friend. You are the prime suspect of the thievery. You may call me Dongfang Fenghuang, or you may call me Dongfang-xiaojie, but you may not address me in that way."

Chen Nan laughed. "Understood. I'm called Chen Bei. I don't mind if you call me Bei." He replied with a fake name.

Crackle! Electric sparks flashed out from Dongfang Fenghuang's body.

"I was just making a joke, you don't have to take it seriously."

"It is best if you don't casually joke around with me. Hurry up and tell me that dumb girl's personality and habits."

Chen Nan said, "I still don't completely understand that little girl. I have only recently come to know her while journeying, but I can still make a guess at where she probably went."

Dongfang Fenghuang said, "You've guessed where she is?"

"She probably went to look for the ancient god's severed hand."

Dongfang Fenghuang smiled. "I didn't expect that dumb girl to be so daring. After brazenly committing so many crimes, she even dares to steal this opportunity."

The remnants of the two ancient gods' battle were in an area fifty li north of the city. As they were leaving, Dongfang Fenghuang suddenly hesitated. Finally, she creased her brows and said to Chen Nan, "The two of us will ride my Great Roc, or else who knows when we'll finally get there."

After Chen Nan and Dongfang Fenghuang leapt onto the back of the Great Roc, the golden Roc swept up a violent wind as it rocketed from the ground. The wind pounded against the duo's ears.

Within Shengfeng Institute, an elder dressed in purple and an elder dressed in blue were currently looking up at the sky.

The purple-draped elder said, "Old fellow, look. Your granddaughter has found a husband."

The blue-draped elder jokingly cursed, "Damn old fool, you really are indecent..."

The purple-draped elder said, "Your granddaughter is proud and arrogant, ambitious and competitive. You really made a mistake raising

her."

The blue-draped elder replied, "Rubbish. When my granddaughter decides to be warm and gentle, she can even melt eternally frozen ice. You just haven't gotten the chance to see it."

...

The Golden Roc's flying speed was as fast as a streak of lightning. Every lofty mountain and winding river sped passed them. As they went, because of Chen Nan's 'earnest' and 'diligent' prodding, Dongfang Fenghuang was left without a choice but to roughly explain to him the rumours of the god's severed hand.

Three months ago, when a wealthy family of the City of Crime was doing some construction, they excavated from the ground a metal case. Inside was an old sheepskin scroll, but no one could read the scroll's ancient script.

Afterwards, the ancient sheepskin scroll was sent to the city lord's residence. Several of the city lords dispatched people all over the continent to invite several experts skilled in ancient script. Finally, one month ago, the scroll's script was finally translated. The content that was written was more or less the same as what Chen Nan had heard when he was eating at the restaurant.

This matter caused the City of Freedom to become bustling with activity. After that, messenger pigeons spread the news all throughout the continent. Countless practitioners rushed towards the origin, all wanting to search for the ancient god's severed hand and thereby receive

whatever was being held in its palm.

Chen Nan sighed. "The mystery within the middle of Tianyuan Continent's boundless mountains is incomparable. Last time, near the western border of Chu, a qilin appeared in the Luofeng Mountain Range. This time, a god's severed hand has caused a disturbance in the vicinity of the City of Crime."

Dongfang Fenghuang said, "These hundreds of thousands of mountains harbour secrets and treasures. There are many more things that you can't even begin to imagine."

Chen Nan asked, "Why did that qilin suddenly vanish last time? Why wasn't Shenfeng Institute able to capture it?"

Dongfang Fenghuang answered, "The qilin is a mythical beast that surpasses the five ranks. How could it so easily be caught by others? I suppose it's still somewhere in one of these countless mountains."

The Golden Roc continued to soar like lightning. Fifty li was traversed in a blink. The lush blue-green hills and valleys below them offered an exquisite scenery. It was hard to imagine that a battle between gods had once occurred here.

But with careful inspection, you'd be able to discover that in the vast green, there were many deep ravines that seemed to have been carved from forceful strikes. Additionally, the apex of a few short mountains seemed to have been smoothly cleaved off. At the base of those mountains were many great boulders and rocks scattered about.

Previously, Chen Nan had doubted the rumour of the ancient gods' battle, but now he firmly believed in it. Seeing what was left of the destruction, he could visualize how desperate and violent that earth-shattering battle was. He seemed to be able to hear the heaven falling and the earth splitting—and the sound of ghosts weeping and gods bawling.

Within the verdant mountain range, in that vast space, there were many human figures scurrying about.

Dongfang Fenghuang said, "Within a circumference of thirty li is where the two gods' battle was held. You go down and search, I'll stay in the sky and look."

"A circumference of thirty li!" Chen Nan took in a gulp of cool air.

The Golden Roc spiralled down and Chen Nan leapt off of its back. He took in a great breath of air and exclaimed, "How fragrant!"

Dongfang Fenghuang heard his outburst and her face drastically took a turn. She quickly uttered an incantation and a bolt of lightning struck towards Chen Nan. Chen Nan quickly dodged several chi to the side with a leap in the air. With a bang, the lightning struck the ground. When Chen Nan landed, a scorched black ditch appeared where he had previously been standing.

By now, the Golden Roc had already flown back up. Dongfang Fenghuang coldly said, "How dare you act frivolous in my presence. Consider yourself lucky!"

"Able woman!"

Within the mountains, human figures bobbed up and down. The originally peaceful, secluded mountainous forest now had many visitors due to the ancient god's severed hand. Within the woods, birds and animals all cried, occasionally scattering in all directions.

Chen Nan crossed over three hills and arrived in a valley. Carefully peering down, he realized that this was actually once a lake, but it had now dried up. The stream of water that had filled this lake had already been diverted elsewhere. From a winding path through the side, he found that the river had been diverted because of a boulder that had landed in its path.

Gazing at the short mountain that had lost its peak, Chen Nan seemed to be able to see the two gods battling. An ancient god chopped his hand horizontally, cleaving off the mountain's summit. The crushed remains of the summit flew every which way, and one boulder in particular landed in this very river, cutting off the flow of water and diverting its route...

That momentary daydream made his blood boil with anger. He believed that after cultivating martial arts to the very peak, he too would be able to split mountains and rivers, because his father's incredible power was still fresh in his memory to this day.

Just then, the conversation between two practitioners found its way to Chen Nan's ears. He heard one of them say, "That girl is too hateful. Yesterday, she was loudly proclaiming that she had found the god's hand, but when everyone showed up, she had already disappeared. You could say she had made a mistake, but she did the same thing again today."

She's actually just teasing all the practitioners here. She's a hateful creature, through and through."

The other person said, "If not for her White Tiger mount that can run like lightning through the trees, she probably would have already been caught."

"Why do I feel like she resembles the Great Flying Tiger Thief from the City of Freedom?"

...

Chen Nan truly wanted to immediately catch the Little Princess and viciously pinch her cheeks. In fact, he even had an urge to strangle her to death. This little girl was simply a troublemaker. After stealing from people in the City of Crime, she even ran to this place to pester and annoy everyone. The troubles she caused arose one after another, without any pause.

He thought, "This little girl is seriously insufferable. She should have been confined in the imperial palace for a lifetime!"

Chen Nan ran up to the two practitioners and said, "Greetings, two brothers. May I ask where that girl you are talking about appeared today?"

The two of them looked at him suspiciously. "Do you know her?"

Chen Nan smiled. "How could I know her? Yesterday, I was also

swindled by that hateful little girl. I'm preparing to capture her now."

"Oh. Well it was over by those trees up ahead."

Chen Nan bid farewell to the two of them and went up ahead. After walking through the forest for a while, he came across some more practitioners, but he couldn't find a trace of the Little Princess. Suddenly, the cry of a Roc echoed from overhead. Dongfang Fenghuang's Golden Roc spiralled down in descent.

"Hey, Chen Bei, are you sure that dumb girl came here? I've looked everywhere in a thirty li circumference and I haven't found any signs of her."

Chen Nan said, "She definitely came here. Just a moment ago, someone was talking about her. I think she's somewhere around here, but this forest is too thick; I haven't been able to find her yet."

Just then, a few shouts could be heard coming from up ahead: "Everyone, come quick! That hateful girl is here..."

The depths of the forest suddenly became noisy. Many practitioners went over to the origin of the call. Dongfang Fenghuang gave Chen Nan a glance and said, "Quick, mount my Roc."

Chen Nan quickly leapt up and the Golden Roc flew through the forest like lightning, causing everyone en route to cry out in surprise. In the distance, they could spot a tiger with immaculate white fur running away. On the tiger's back was a slender, spaciously-dressed girl. The girl's face

was covered by a veil. The muslin was occasionally blown up by the wind, and in that quick instance, one could vaguely see her exceptional beauty.

Dongfang Fenghuang said, "It really is that dumb girl and her Tiger King."

Although the princess was currently at large, she wasn't flustered at all. She constantly yelled to those behind her: "Hurry up! You guys are too slow. My Xiao Yu has even taken a few breaks while you guys were chasing us..."

Chen Nan was annoyed and amused. The little demon seemed to consider this a game. He really didn't know whether to laugh or to cry.

He yelled from the sky, "Little demon, you troublemaker, do you know what you're doing?"

The princess raised her head to find a familiar-looking Golden Roc. Not only that, but she recognized Dongfang Fenghuang as the masked girl that she had previously fought. She seemed to understand something and cried out, "Xiao Yu, flee! Two bastards have come."

Dongfang Fenghuang angrily shouted, "Dumb girl, how dare you speak so rudely towards me? Have you forgotten the lesson I taught you last time?"

"Old woman, soon or later, I'll have my revenge."

"Dumb girl, this time I will punish you severely."

The Tiger King Xiao Yu bore his way through the trees like a silver arrow. The princess continuously cursed at the sky: "Damn degenerate, you actually teamed up with that old woman to catch me. Sooner or later, I'll rip out your tendons, peel off your skin, pick off your bones..." In her eyes, although Chen Nan was incomparably abominable, he was after all still her 'travelling companion'. Now that he had actually colluded with an 'outsider' to catch her, she felt beyond resentful.

Chen Nan's teeth throbbed in anger, but he had no alternative but to repeatedly clench his fists.

The princess shouted, "You two want to catch me, don't think I don't know that. The two of you are bastards! Hmph! Complete trash! Just as bad as each other! Villains colluding together! A snake and a rat in the same nest! Add another bastard to the mix..."

Chen Nan had long ago become used to the princess's 'wise words', but the more Dongfang Fenghuang heard, the more infuriated she became. She angrily clenched her teeth. Sparks endlessly cackled at her fingers.

A cliff appeared in front of the princess, leaving her no choice but to order Xiao Yu to unfold his wings and fly. One tiger and one bird—one ahead, one in pursuit—flew like lightning cutting through the sky.

All the practitioners in the forest were gawking up at the sky in amazement. They began discussing the scene before them one after another:

"Turns out that hateful girl is the Great Flying Tiger Thief that was

causing a ruckus in the City of Crime a few days ago."

"This girl is too hateful. How can she cause so many problems? She even dares to come and tease us."

...

Although Xiao Yu was naturally a unique beast, his power had already fallen to merely the first rank, and now, he couldn't fly as fast as the Golden Roc. The distance between the two became smaller and smaller. In a moment, they would fall within the range of Dongfang Fenghuang's magical attacks.

The princess's eyes shifted. She loudly shouted behind her, "Old woman-jiejie, I won't run anymore. How about we stop and talk about this properly."

Dongfang Fenghuang's angrily replied, "Dumb girl, all you've been doing is trying to anger me. Let's see what you'll do after I catch you." With that said, she began launched her magical bombardments. A dragon of flames pressed closer and closer towards Xiao Yu's rear, gradually approaching.

The princess urgently said, "Jiejie, I don't know how to address you, so I have to address you like that. Quickly stop your magical attacks, I won't run."

Chen Nan was inwardly puzzled. Although the Little Princess had lowered her voice, she definitely had a plan. Hearing her words,

Dongfang Fenghuang's heart warmed in triumph and she stopped her fiery spells. "Then quickly stop. Don't run anymore."

The three humans and two beasts were now already quite far from the ancient gods' battlefield, about fifty or sixty li away. There were already no signs of any practitioners in pursuit of them. The princess had the Tiger King descend in a valley. The Golden Roc trailed closely behind. The valley was hemmed in by three mountains. The landscape was marvellous. A brook leisurely flowed towards the valley. Within the valley, all colours of camellia blossomed. Their flowery scent drifted boundlessly, intoxicating anyone.

The princess shouted, "The scene here is truly too beautiful! Wow, it's so fragrant!"

Chen Nan said, "Little demon, do you know what you've done? You've caused many problems."

The Little Princess blinked her big, innocent eyes at him. "Weren't you the one that made me do all that?"

When Dongfang Fenghuang heard these words, she quickly distanced herself from Chen Nan. Regardless of the truth behind the dumb girl's words, she still felt some lingering fear. After all, she had been travelling with some martial artist of unknown identity. Magi were most afraid of battling in close range with a martial artist. She immediately blamed herself for being too careless. She had made a huge mistake as a magus and a layer of cold sweat formed on her body.

The instant Chen Nan heard her words, he knew the situation was going

south. The hateful princess had actually trapped him. "Little demon, what bullshit are you talking about? When did I make you do that?"

The princess, feeling infinitely wronged, said, "It was you who wanted me to go looting, and when the situation became tense, you had me hide. I've been following your orders all along. It's just that in these deep mountains, I'm seriously bored, so I was playing around with those practitioners. I know what I did wrong—I shouldn't have teased them. Just now, it was also my fault. I don't blame you, it's just that I thought you had wanted to make me your scapegoat and have that lady catch me, so I felt betrayed and couldn't contain my curses..."

When Dongfang Fenghuang heard these words, she quickly withdrew a few more paces. She prepared for battle.

Chen Nan was angry enough to vomit blood. This time, even diving into the Yellow River wouldn't cleanse him.

"Little demon, you... It was clearly all your doing. Why are you trying to frame me? Little girl, you truly are matchlessly cunning. Hmph, you think Dongfang-xiaojie is that easy to trick? Don't waste your energy."

The Little Princess tore off her veil. Her beauty was on full display. But now, her delicate face was stricken with the look of sadness. She faintly sighed, "Chen Nan, how can you treat me like this? I truly feel hurt..."

Dongfang Fenghuang was infuriated. "So you're actually called Chen Nan. Before, you tricked me into calling you Chen Bei, hmpf!"

Chen Nan wanted to cry foul, but this time, he was afraid it was too hard to explain.

The princess sighed, "The two of us grew up together. Luckily, I had you to regard as my elder brother. Never did I expect that once we encountered difficulties, for the purpose of self-preservation, you'd actually make me your scapegoat..."

She became angrier and angrier and more absorbed in her act. All the wrongs she had received in the past days were now being vented out. She nearly shed tears. It wasn't that the princess didn't want her act to be a bit more lifelike, it was just that no matter how she blinked her eyes, no tears came out.

Hearing this, Chen Nan was left wide-eyed and slack-jawed. He inwardly shouted at the princess for being so cunning and sly to put on such a play. He really couldn't explain his way out easily.

Dongfang Fenghuang said, "Dumb girl, although you've said a lot, I still don't completely believe you. In order to prove your innocence, you must return with me to Shengfeng Institute for some time. Do you dare?"

The princess nodded. "I'm willing to follow jiejie back in order to prove my innocence."

"Good. Let's depart." Dongfang Fenghuang leapt up onto her Golden Roc.

The princess said, "Today I really am too heartbroken. I didn't expect

him to treat me like this. Jiejie, I still have a few words I wish to say to him."

"Fine, go talk to him."

The princess walked up to Chen Nan and lowered her voice. "Damn degenerate, smelly bully, you got what you deserved."

Chen Nan really felt like going insane. Today, in his fight with the princess, he had been slandered at the key moment. He had no way to explain his way out.

"Wu... Little demon, you're killing me."

"You deserve it. Who told you to bring that old woman here to catch me."

"She threatened me. She was going to post my wanted poster all over the City of Crime as the Great Flying Tiger Thief for everyone to see. This disaster is all because of you."

"Then you still shouldn't have sold me out."

"You have the identity of a princess. Even if you're caught, it won't matter. As long as I drop them some hints, they'll release you."

The princess giggled. "Of course. Who told you to repeatedly offend me, a princess? How about you go wait for the City of Freedom's people

to catch you." With that said, she flew to the Tiger King Xiao Yu's side and let herself up.

The Golden Roc and the Tiger King Xiao Yu soared through the sky. Chen Nan loudly shouted, "Hey hey hey... Little demon, Dongfang-xiaojie, I still haven't gotten up yet. How could you guys forget me?"

Up in the air, the princess sighed, "You treated me so cruelly, yet you still want me to give you a ride?"

Dongfang Fenghuang said, "You stay here and reflect upon your actions properly, whatever your name is."

"Hey, little demon, Fenghuang... you guys can't just leave me here."

When Dongfang Fenghuang heard his address, she brandished her magic wand and shot a fierce flame at him. Following the flame were several bolts of lightning streaking towards him.

Chen Nan hid from the lightning behind some boulders in the valley. When her chain of attacks finally ended, the Little Princess and Dongfang Fenghuang had already disappeared into the horizon.

"Fuck...!" Chen Nan wanted to cry, but no tears came out. He was unexpectedly abandoned by the two of them within these mountains. There was a great distance of at least a hundred li from the City of Crime. If he were to cross each and every mountain to go back, only heaven knew how long that would take.

"Gods, devils, help me punish those two women. They are too cruel, especially that little demon. She's simply a little..."

Chen Nan walked through the mountains. Despite the fact that the way was filled with the scent of flowers and the songs of birds, and perhaps even an occasional unique beast making an appearance, he wasn't in the mood to go sightseeing. He wanted nothing more but to return to the City of Freedom before sunset, or else when nighttime fell, how could he possibly make progress on his way back.

"I was already acting very passively. I wasn't even at the scene of the crime! If that little demon goes off and fabricates as many lies as she wants, then if that old monster finds out, even if I had a hundred mouths, I still wouldn't be able to explain anything! Fuck!"

Chen Nan seemed to already be able to visualize his portrait being posted all over the City of Crime and how the countless experts from Shengfeng Institute would pursue him. He would have to always be on the run. When he thought of this, a shiver ran down his spine. If he returned to the City of Freedom in this fashion, it was extremely probable that he truly would be pursued like he had just imagined.

The faint notion of fleeing from the City of Freedom gradually arose in his mind, but whether he fled or not, he would still have to pay the city one last visit—because in these boundless mountains, he wouldn't be able to find that strip of path connecting the eastern and western continent.

